ERUSALEM SYNDROME: TRAVELERS WHO BECOME THE MESSIAH

The Atlantic Monthly

MAY 1995

THE DIVERSITY MYTH: AMERICA'S LEADING EXPORT

Through most of America's history the nation's unity and stability have derived not from a welcome of diversity but from imposition of the dominant Anglo culture. Now, failing to understand ourselves, we fail to understand the brutal realities of nation-building, and offer naive advice to states torn by civil strife

BY BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

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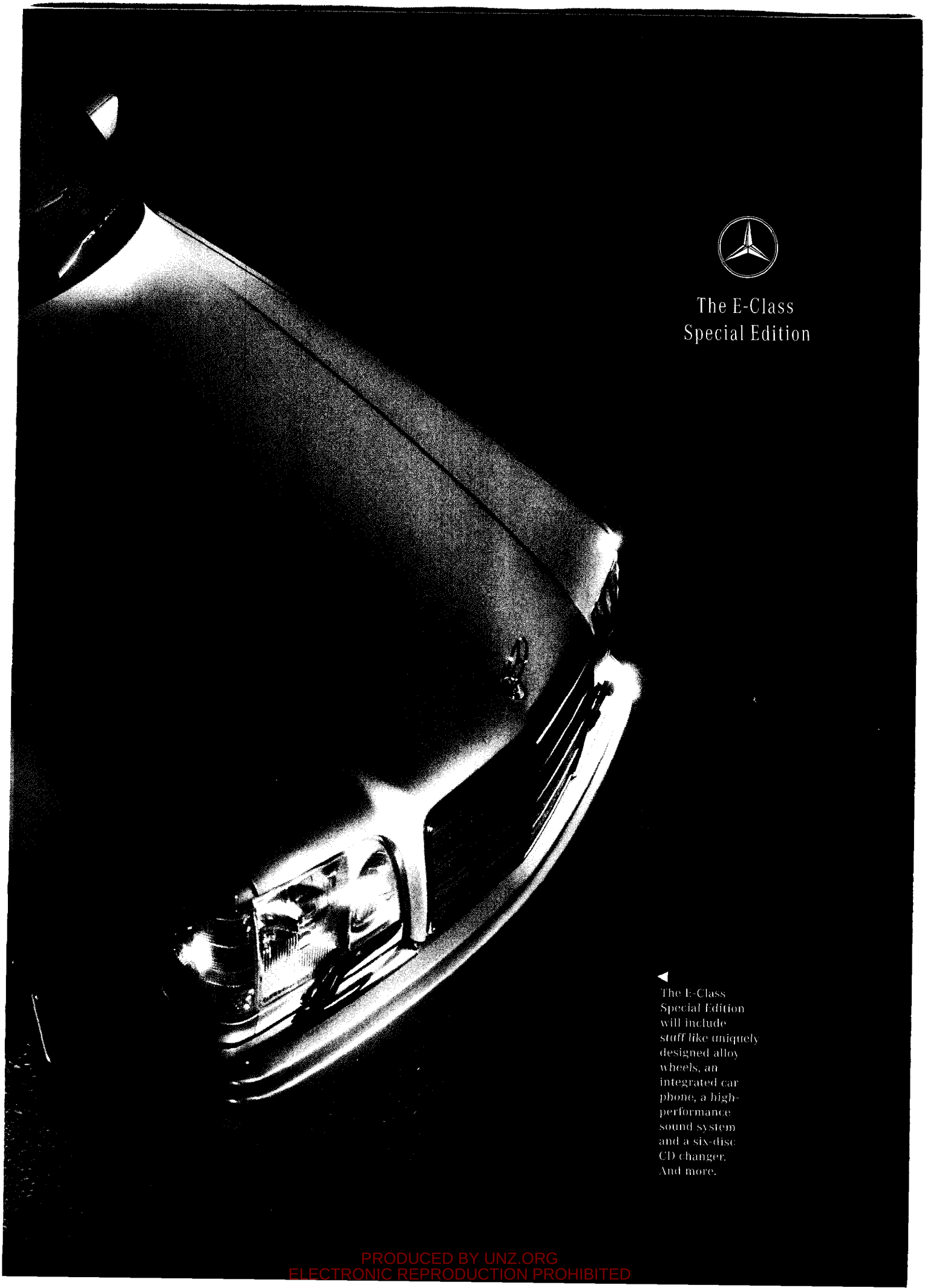

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ELLEN COLTON'S DINNER PARTY WAS THE opening of the season. Her first dinner this particular year was to officially introduce Maggie, though she was already known to many of the ladies who were wearing her Miss MerMaid fashions. Among the guests was Mortimer Sheldon, a leather manufacturer from Massachusetts. He was a childless widower, his wife having died five years earlier. When his eyes first lit on Maggie, his heart beat wildly; he had found the perfect mate. Her diminutive stature, rose-gold hair and delicate features represented the child he never had; her petite, shapely body–a pocket-Venus, he called her–made her a desirable second wife.

Mortimer had little opportunity to get close to her on that first occasion as she was surrounded most of the evening by others equally eager to welcome her. He left early, his mind a whirl with plans to make her his very own.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING.

Maggie received a huge bouquet of roses tied with a green satin ribbon. A card was pinned to the ribbon with a diamond brooch: "Please accept this as a token of my deepest admiration," she read, astonished. The card was signed "Mortimer Sheldon" and as hard as she tried she could not remember him.

Four o clock was the accepted time for callers and Ellen's home became the only place to be at teatime (although there were stronger libations for those who wanted them). Mortimer was the first to call that day, carrying a tremendous bouquet. When he was announced, Maggie came forward to meet him, took the flowers and asked the maid to put them in water. As she extended her hand he held it too long and kissed it greedily. Inwardly she recoiled from this unprepossessing old man. He was approaching fifty and the passing years and his unstinting devotion to business had not been kind to him. His eyes had puffy, dark bags under them, his whole being had sagged and his mouth on her hand felt loose-lipped and wet. Although he did not resemble the man in the least, a picture of Dr. Henderson flashed in Maggie's mind's eye. A few years ago, Maggie would have run from him; but now she called on her newly acquired sophistication to handle the situation.

"Mr. Sheldon," (she withdrew her hand wishing she could wipe it off) "thank you for the flowers, but I cannot accept the gift you attached to them. She reached into a pocket of her dress and held out the diamond pin.

He pushed her hand away. "My dear, this is just a token of my affection. There is much more I will give you when we get to know each other better."

"Again I thank you," Maggie said firmly, "but believe me when I say I do not accept gifts of any or anything of value. Flowers if you insist although I prefer not to receive anything."

Mortimer, delighted by her reserve, said, "I am very wealthy my dear, and it gives me pleasure to lay treasures at your feet."

Exasperated, Maggie was about to answer when another caller was announced. She trust the roots into his hand and swirled out of the room to greet the newcomer. She managed to dodge Mortimer's attentions for the rest of the afternoon and was satisfied that she had discouraged this persistent admirer. She had not.

Mortimer was obsessed with Maggie's extreme youth and enchanting prettiness and came every afternoon always with flowers and a card. One had decorated but, as long it [illegible] trinket hidden among the [illegible]. Later he caught her as she was leaving to ask him to receive a young law student who was also in love with Maggie but secretly [illegible] Maggie! Mortimer [illegible] nadiently pulled her to the terrace. "I love you Maggie I want you for my wife. Marry me!" He had his hands on her shoulders to draw her close, slobbering wet kisses on her face. With a [illegible] wrenched out of his [illegible] hands and slipped from his [illegible] much force as she could muster [illegible] who had witnessed the [illegible] called for help and came running, ostensibly to Maggie's aid but it wasn't necessary. Mortimer was rubbing his [illegible] cheek stunned at the unexpected [illegible] John Pirsig guiding Mortimer to the door was angry, but [illegible] order an. What [illegible] for the [illegible] with you, Morty [illegible] is wrong [illegible] Maggie alone!" he said [illegible] leave [illegible] "I would rather [illegible]

I LOVE [illegible]

Mortimer whined "I can do so much for her" can you understand that [illegible] doesn't want this? She has [illegible] to become [illegible] in her own right.

"She's only a child! She doesn't know what she want. I can show her the world," Mortimer pleaded [illegible]

John took a deep breath [illegible] "We've been friends for a long time Morty and I'm sorry to say this but you must ask you [illegible]

You're being cruel but [illegible] patient. You will see she'll come to [illegible] one day. Mortimer babbled [illegible]

And no more gifts [illegible]

Not even flowers? [illegible]

John had him out of the [illegible] time and said he had one [illegible]

Not even flowers stay away [illegible]

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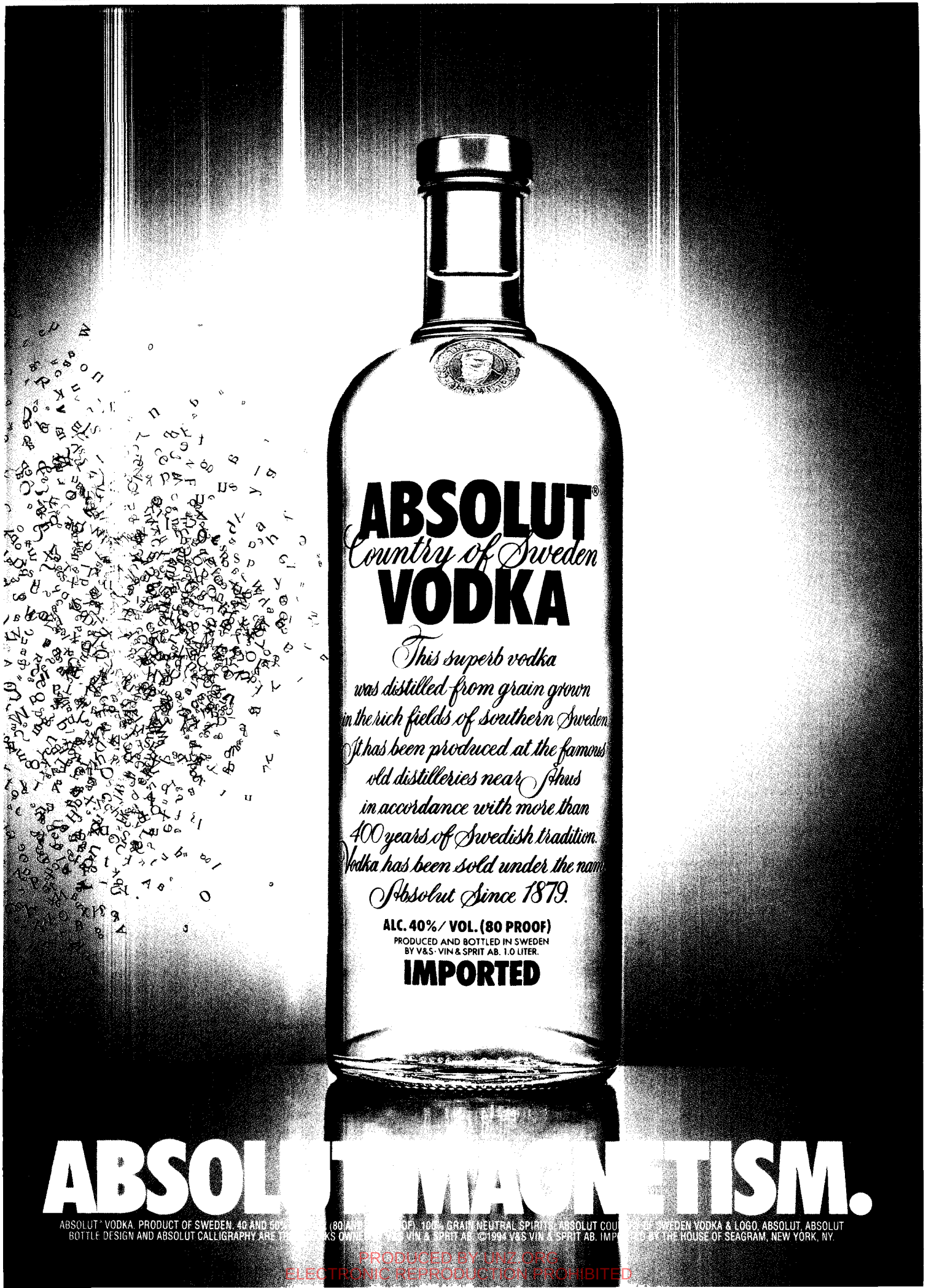

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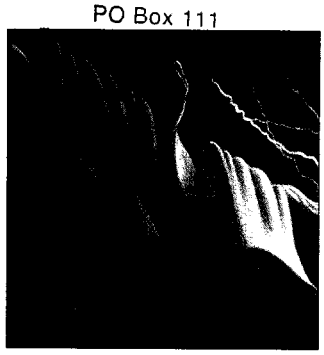

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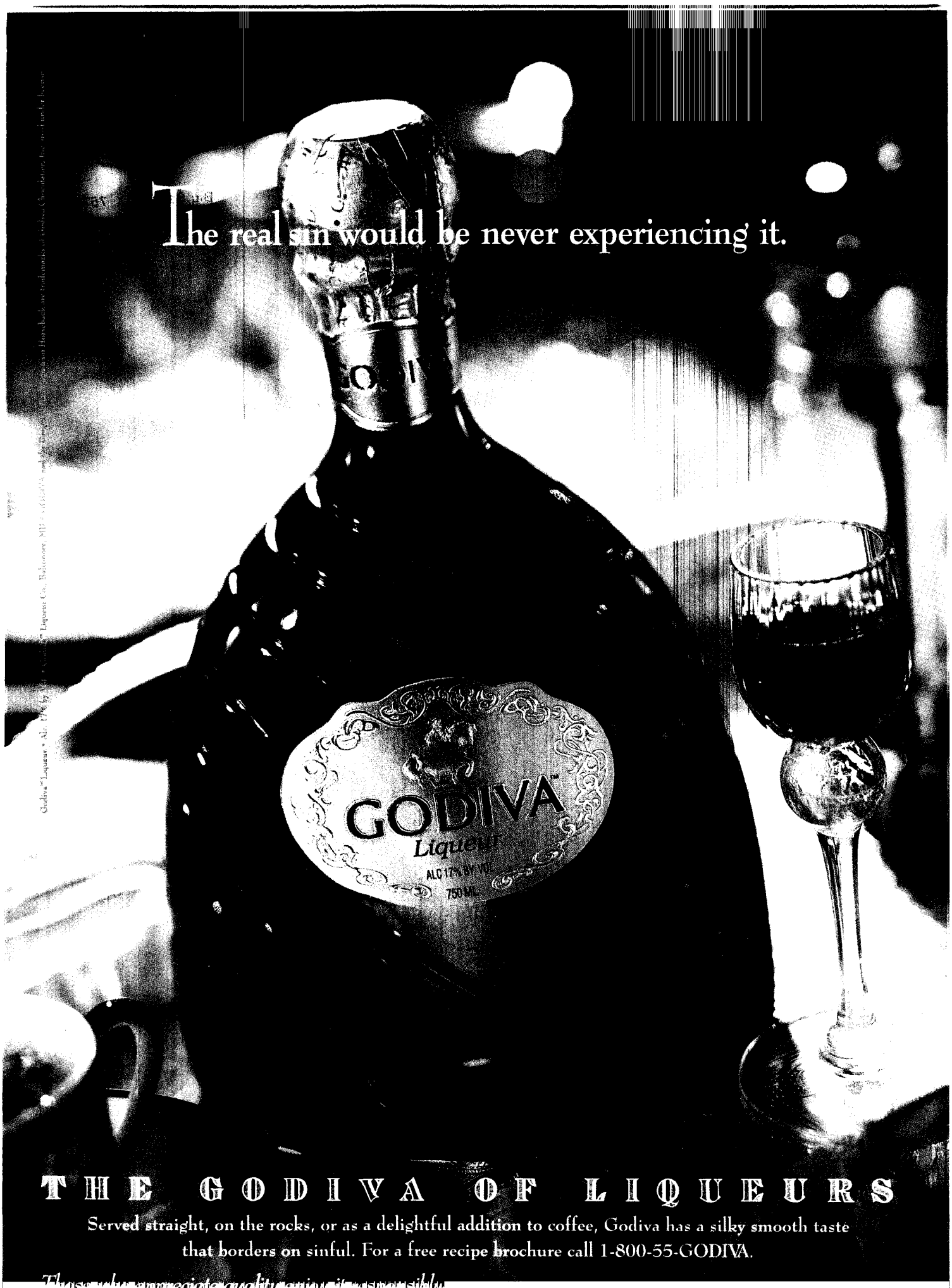

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WHEN Wendy Kaminer's *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional: The Recovery Movement and Other Self-Help Fashions* was published, three years ago, it won the signal distinction of front-page attention in *The New York Times Book Review*. "Like an anthropologist exploring an exotic tribe," the enthusiastic *Times* reviewer wrote of Kaminer,

> she descends into church basements and takes elevators to hospital meeting rooms in order to learn the language and customs of 12-step support groups. . . . She addresses skeptical questions to speakers at co-dependency conferences in fancy hotels and gets reprimanded in return. And she cuts a wide swath through the thickets of self-help books published every year, many of which are best sellers with stupendously long shelf lives.

LILIAN KEMP

It is perhaps a form of poetic justice that Kaminer's book itself continues to thrive on the shelf.

Kaminer, an *Atlantic Monthly* contributing editor, has a new book coming out this month—*It's All the Rage: Crime and Culture*, portions of which appeared in this magazine in May and June of last year. The book, published by Addison-Wesley, looks at the full range of crime-control issues, from mandatory sentencing to the death penalty, from television violence to the lust for vengeance. Those familiar with Kaminer's forceful style of exposition will be unsurprised that *It's All the Rage* does not read like a typical book on public policy, full of dense noun clusters and dull passive constructions. The book opens with these words: "When I was a senior in high school I fantasized about murdering my driver's ed teacher."

A lawyer as well as a social critic, Kaminer was exposed to the criminal-justice system when she worked as a public defender in Brooklyn in the late 1970s—"not nearly long enough to get any good at it," she recalls, "but long enough to get a sense of the system." Since the mid-1980s she has been associated with Radcliffe College as either a visiting scholar or a public-policy fellow. How did Kaminer come to write about crime, a subject seemingly far removed from that of her previous book? "The new book is not unrelated to *I'm Dysfunctional, You're Dysfunctional*," Kaminer says. "One of its subjects is the intrusion of ideals from the recovery movement into the criminal-justice system. It looks at the ideas of moral agency, individual accountability, and victimhood, which underlie our notions of justice." —THE EDITORS

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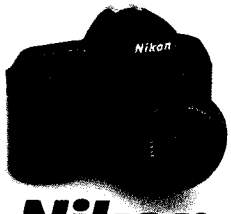

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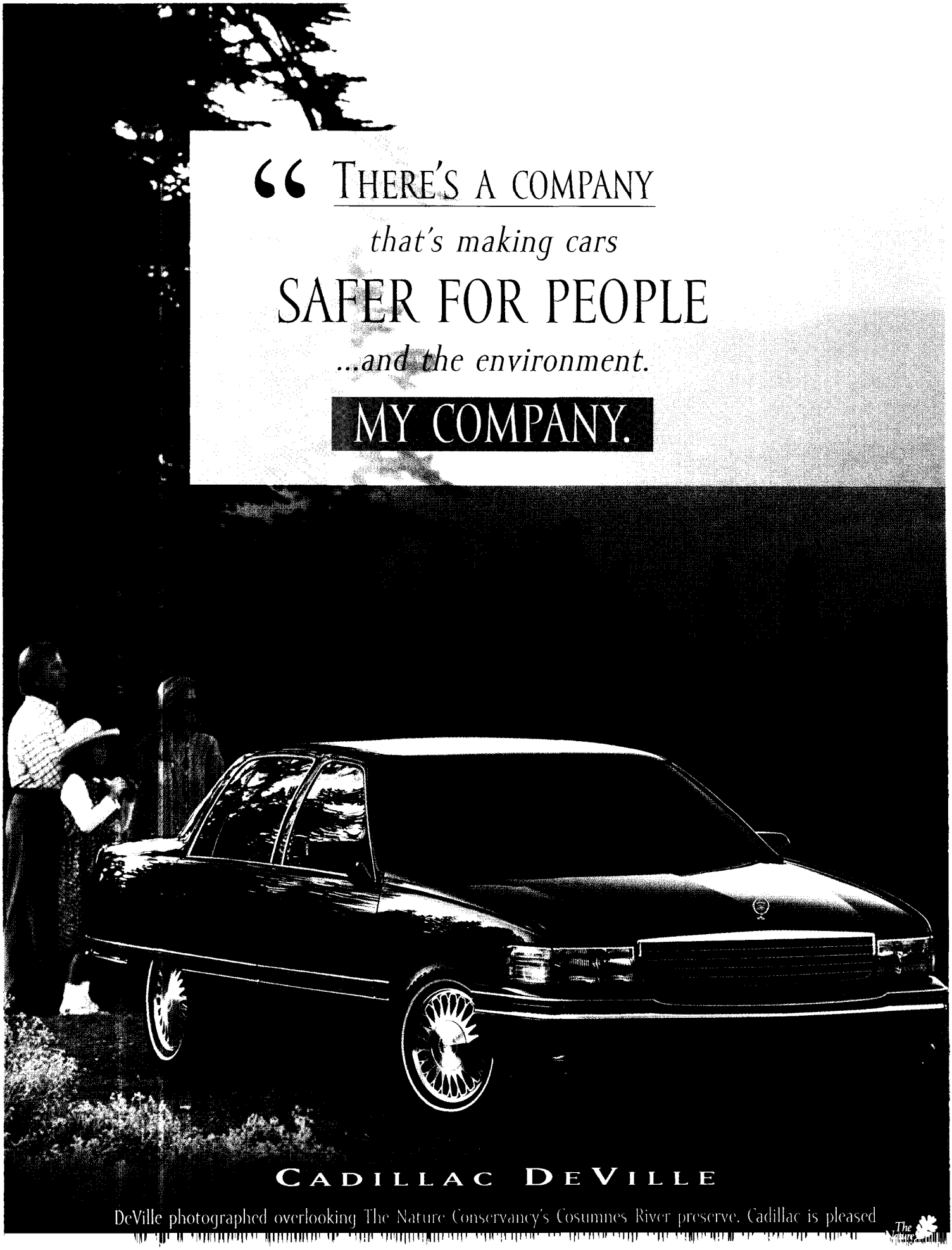

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LETTERS

Reinventing Government

I'm glad to see *The Atlantic Monthly*, through Peter F. Drucker's February essay ("*Really* Reinventing Government") join the national debate over reinventing the federal government. However, I'm sorry to read that Drucker discredits the reinvention efforts within President Clinton's Administration as merely producing "a nationwide yawn." He is wrong. The real story is one of far more progress than Drucker reported.

Your readers might appreciate, for instance, that our reinvention effort, also termed "an empty slogan" by Drucker, has so far reduced federal employment by 102,000 full-time positions. This places us well ahead of schedule in our original goal of reducing the federal work force by 272,900 by 1999. We also have locked into law more than $63 billion in real savings in government operations. This success came from phase one of the National Performance Review.

I am pleased to see Drucker's recommendations echo the President's December order to all federal departments and agencies to examine thoroughly and honestly their need for existence. Already, in the first few weeks of our second round of reviews, we've laid the groundwork for another $76 billion in savings through new cuts and a seven-year freeze in government spending levels.

With the first and second rounds of reinvention now saving at least $139 billion, we are talking real savings and real reinvention here.

We mean business. We've asked all departments and agencies how, if they were to be eliminated, their goals could be undertaken by states or localities, by the private sector, or not at all. We've asked all departments and agencies what they would do to improve service to their customers if they keep their role. And we want all departments and agencies to ask customers for input on possible changes—this in conjunction with keeping their customers first.

With the President's blessing, I have told the reinvention groups in every federal department and agency to look at all the options—even the ones that are so bold as to make them nervous. I've told them that if they're not taking risks, then they are not going to create the government of tomorrow.

I agree with Drucker that ideas about reinventing government are not new. For decades Presidents, senators, and CEOs have offered words upon words on the subject, but none have taken any significant action. The late Grace Commission is a case in point. Despite great fanfare on its arrival, most of its recommendations languished in the White House.

This time around, though, things are different. President Clinton is committed to and fully engaged in efforts to reinvent the government. He has directed his Cabinet and all agency heads to cooperate with the National Performance Review and has instructed them to be bold. Most important, they are all accountable to him. We are delivering to the American people a government that works better and costs less.

Al Gore
Vice President of the United States
Washington, D.C.

In "*Really* Reinventing Government," Peter Drucker asserts that every agency should be confronted with three basic questions: "What is your mission?" "Is it still worth doing?" "If we were not already doing this, would we now go into it?" Perfectly appropriate.

But in reading his flawed paragraph describing the "Veterans Administration"—which in 1989 became the Department of Veterans Affairs—it is hard to discern that Drucker has followed his own advice. Example: He begins by declaring that the VA's medical mission "may have been accomplished," and ends by saying that we should close our hospi-

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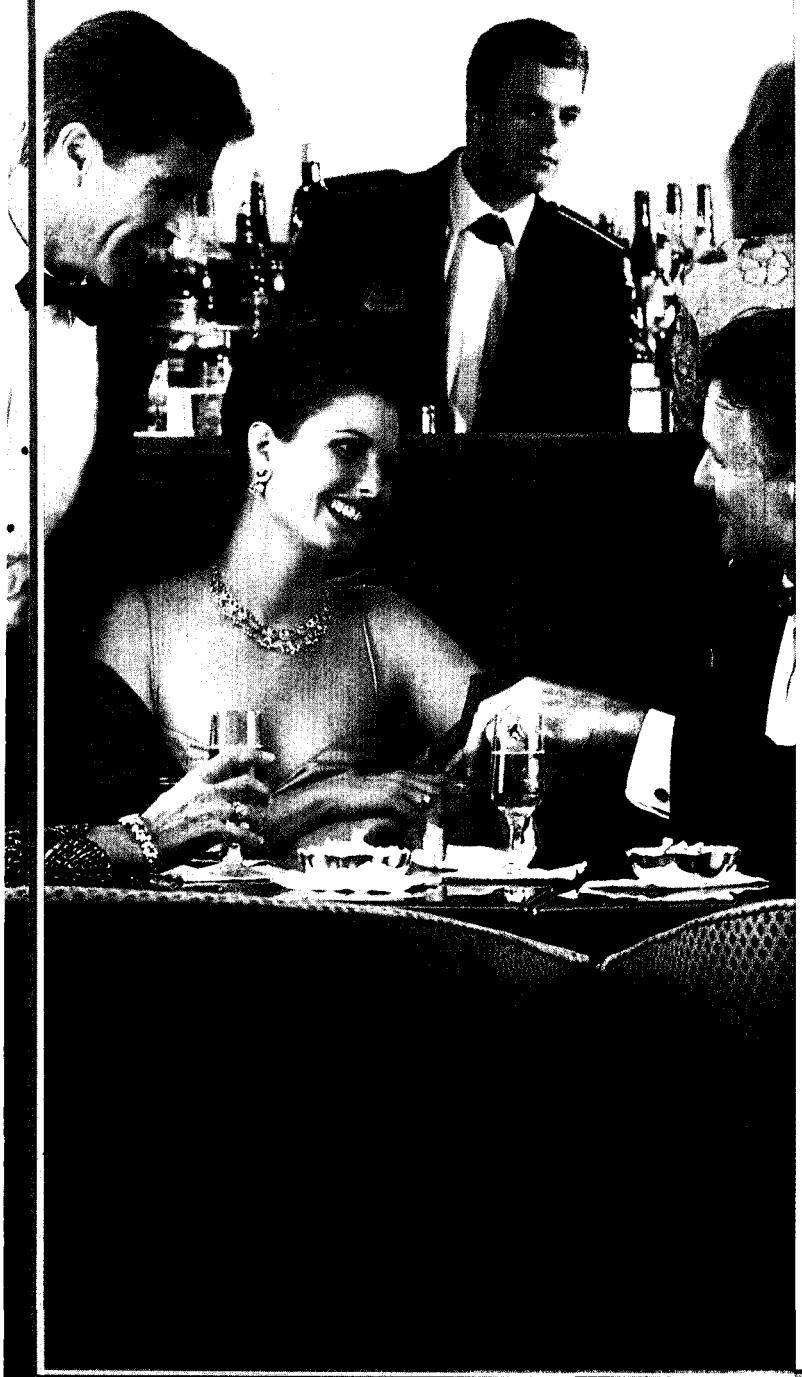

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The Atlantic Monthly

tals and nursing homes and contract the job out to the private sector. He builds his case with some artful historical revisionism about the way the VA system evolved, but how in the world could anyone—unless he is badly misinformed—ever conclude that we don't have a mission anymore?

There is the not-small matter of some 26.3 million living veterans to whom society feels an obligation to provide an institutional structure to respond to their needs after military service. Don't take my word for it. Read a recent Harris poll conducted for *Business Week* which shows 75 percent of the public opposing the elimination of the VA—the highest score among listed agencies. The "worth" of the VA's mission is not something to be determined with balance-sheet analyses that have bottom-line answers. Support for what we do flows directly from citizens who over the course of more than 200 years of American history have said they want their government to take care of our veterans. Drucker has chosen the worst possible example of a federal program ready to be scrapped.

Jesse Brown
Secretary of Veterans Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Responsibility and Punishment

The premise of John Staddon's article "On Responsibility and Punishment" (February *Atlantic*)—that our punishment policies are a major contributor to crime and that revamping them will significantly reduce crime—is wrong. U.S. punishment criteria are not more lenient than those of, say, Japan or Britain, but those countries have substantially less crime than we do. Something other than punishment severity must be the reason for the lower crime rates.

Certainly, dangerous offenders must be jailed. And swift punishment of the guilty must be the norm; the magnitude of the punishment is of secondary importance. A potential criminal will not be deterred from committing a crime if the penalty is, say, a sentence of three years rather than two. An inherently law-abiding person would abhor spending even a few days in prison. The ineffectiveness of punishment as a deterrent is demonstrated in the famous Hogarth etching that shows pickpockets operating in a crowd that is witnessing the public hanging of a pickpocket.

In addition to being off base in regard to its major premise, the argument presents problems in its details. The author says that punishment should be compatible with the harm done to society by the crime. Does this mean, for example, that the murderer of a mentally retarded, institutionalized person should get a lighter punishment than one who kills a working mother of four young children? Quantitatively evaluating the societal harm resulting from a crime and then correlating the amount of harm to a punishment level would present almost insurmountable problems to judges and juries.

There are no easy or obvious solutions to the crime problem. It is irresponsible and counterproductive to present false hopes.

Sylvan Gollin
Claremont, Calif.

John Staddon's outrage is as fresh as last year's *Geraldo*. Yes, punishment works faster than reinforcement in the short run (and it is cheaper in the short run). Yes, punishing a rat will prevent him from pressing a bar, because he had no compelling reason to press it in the first place. But punishing a child or adolescent for sexual behavior (an example that Staddon had the frightening temerity to cite) will form not an asexual adult but a deviantly sexual adult, owing to the familiar process that Skinner called "countercontrol" (not "counterattack").

The problem with contemporary American society is not that so many spoiled rich kids are killing their parents for the money, or that so many put-upon wives are resorting to cutting off their husband's penises. The problem is that there are a million prison inmates, who have created a million instantly filled criminal vacancies.

I sympathize with Staddon's reluctance to let killers go free, but there is already a chorus of voices calling for more prisons, longer sentences, and so forth, with wearisome unanimity. Thousands of callers to radio talk shows have come up with the same solutions, and they don't even have Ph.D.s.

Nick Watters
Chicago, Ill.

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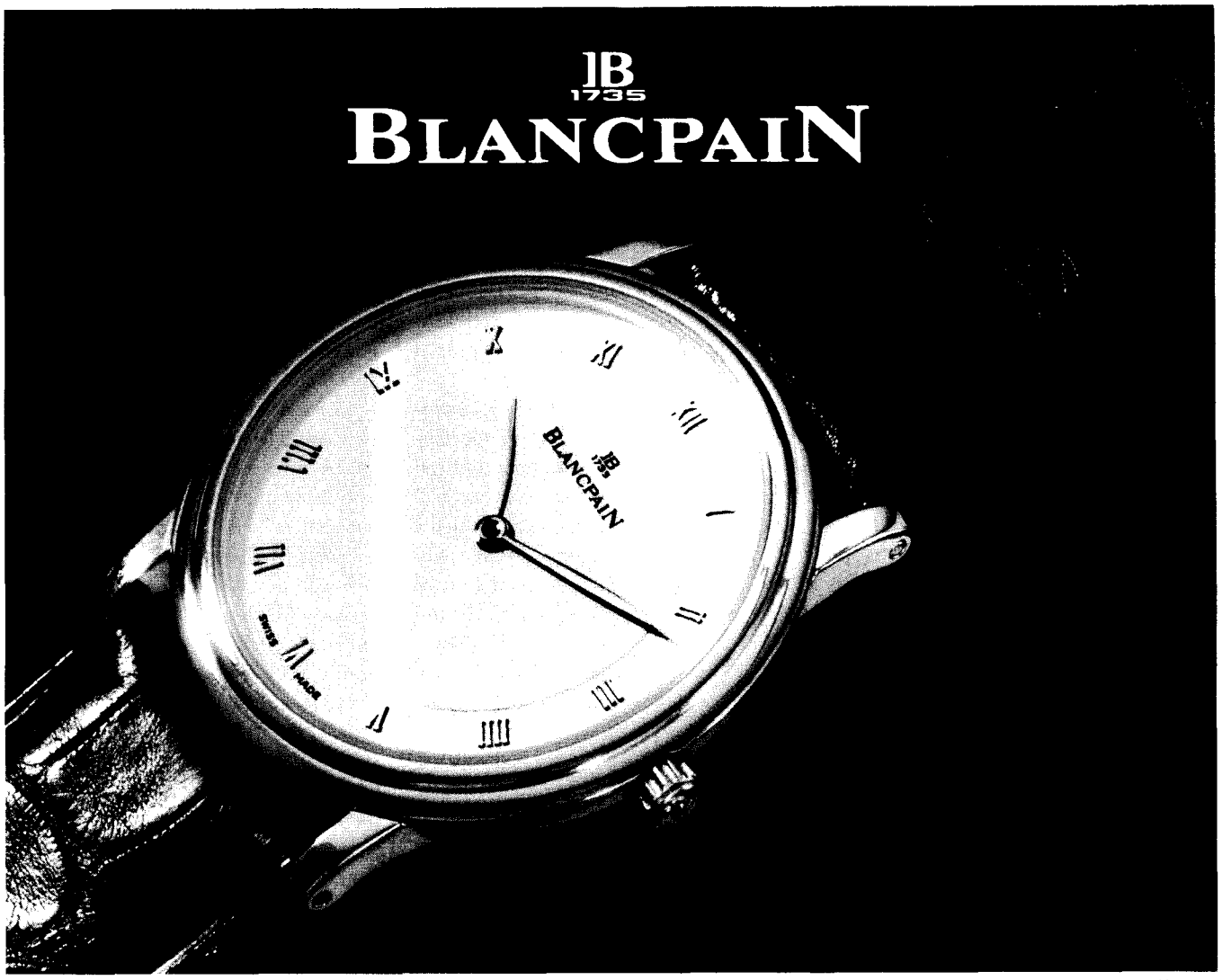

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John Staddon claims that B. F. Skinner defined freedom as the absence of causation. That is an odd claim, since the point of *Beyond Freedom and Dignity* was to attack precisely that definition of freedom. Skinner's discussion of the doctrine of autonomous man was a critique, not an endorsement. Staddon has in effect read the book upside down.

Staddon's "bottom line is that you're free *if you feel free*." But Skinner reviewed at length the inadequacies of that approach. The happy slave may feel free, but we would not envy him his "freedom." A feelings definition of freedom holds the concept hostage to the development of ever more subtle, powerful, and "acceptable" techniques of control. Staddon's definition is subsumed by Skinner's approach in any case: a scientific analysis of behavior would specify not only the conditions under which behavior occurs but also those under which it is, or isn't, accompanied by the feeling of freedom.

Byron Matthews
Santa Fe, N.M.

If punishment is so great, try beating the daylights out of your child or dog each day. Mental-health professionals are standing by. Be careful of the dog, though: he may bite you.

Andrew C. Swan
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

This is one of many letters you will receive from psychologists concerning John Staddon's article on responsibility and punishment. Although there is much to take issue with in the article, I will concentrate on what I consider to be two major points.

The first of these concerns the definition of freedom. Freedom was, in Skinner's view, absence of causation; that is, a "free" person could choose from different alternatives, with no particular predictability. I could have bought chocolate or vanilla ice cream, for example. Skinner of course argued that this was not the true state of affairs: behavior was determined; there was no real choice, though we perceived that we made choices—largely because we had been brought up to believe this.

Skinner's point here was that we cannot trust our perceptions concerning our behavior, as we cannot trust the perception that the sun goes around the earth. It may look that way, but it isn't so. Staddon believes the opposite. Freedom is yours "*if you feel free*." I may feel that I am controlled by Martians; this doesn't make it so. More to the point, I may feel that I have a high level of control over my life, or that I could jump twenty-nine feet if I really tried, or anything else, without that belief's reflecting reality. The belief that one is free is absolutely irrelevant to whether one's behavior is determined or not.

Second, Staddon states that it is "extraordinary that Skinner. . . missed the connection between determinism and the sanctions imposed by the legal system," but Staddon arrives at this point through a misunderstanding. When Skinner said that blame or praise is unnecessary under determinism, he was speaking in the sense of holding positive or negative opinions of people because of their actions—because these people did not "choose" their actions, this is unnecessary. However, since one's behavior is considered to be a function of one's genetics and environment, it makes perfect sense to alter someone's environment by punishment (or by reward), expecting to affect their behavior in the future. Of course, merely punishing a behavior without reinforcing a more positive alternative will be relatively ineffective, Skinner would argue.

Joe W. Hatcher Jr.
Ripon College
Ripon, Wis.

John Staddon replies:

I suspect that the lower levels of crime in Japan and Germany (not, as Sylvan Gollin asserts, in Britain, where property crime is worse than it is in the United States) owe at least as much to the disciplining of children and the universal condemnation of misbehavior as to severe criminal statutes.

As for Gollin's comparison of the societal harm done by murdering a mother and murdering a retarded person, he answers his own objection: we punish all murderers equally because some decisions are impossible to make. Perhaps this is also why we take as an axiom that all persons are equal before the law. But who questions that when outcomes can be compared, the punishment should bear some relation to the harm caused by the crime? We don't decapitate graffiti artists or issue cautions to serial killers.

Nick Watters's letter is full of error and misrepresentation. The psychologist's rat is at least as strongly compelled to press its bar as the adolescent is compelled to engage in sex—perhaps more strongly, since it needs food to live, whereas adolescents are known to survive virginity quite well. I did not say that we should punish children for sexual exploration, nor is the "asexual adult" any part of my aim. What I did say is that we have largely abandoned the idea that children should be deterred from sexual exploration out of mistaken respect for scientifically shaky assertions like Watters's statement that punishment "will form. . .a deviantly sexual adult." Will it really? And what is this *deviance*, anyway?

Byron Matthews's claim that I misrepresent Skinner's view of freedom seems to be refuted by Joe Hatcher; but Matthews's example of the "happy slave" does make a good point. Yes, we would not envy the slave his "freedom," but *we are not he*. If he prefers servitude, who are we to contradict him? If we free him against his will, it must be not because we love freedom but because we hate the institution of slavery.

I agree with Joe Hatcher that "the belief that one is free is absolutely irrelevant to whether one's behavior is determined or not." But free will in Skinner's sense of "uncaused behavior" *is* relevant: free will in this (admittedly odd) sense is the antithesis of determinism, and my main point is that determinism not only does not conflict with the idea of responsibility but is required by it. Praise and blame affect behavior because behavior is to some extent determined by reward and punishment. Whether the praise and blame proceed from philosophically suspect assumptions (as Skinner argued) is completely irrelevant; they work anyway.

Fields of Fear

When lecturing researchers and reporters on how to do their work, Gary Taubes ("Fields of Fear," November *Atlantic*) should get his own facts right. That's hard to do when he avoids talking to many of the people he cites and quotes, preferring instead to cull quotations that suit his agenda. For the record, I would

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never have said that "the bulk of EMF research is paid for by the military," because for most of the past decade the military has hardly funded any studies at all.

Taubes writes as if the only reason for the growing suspicion that EMF may promote breast cancer is a report from the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health of two cases among male workers, which was later "played . . . up widely" by the press.

The facts: The JHU group announced the findings in November of 1989, at a Department of Energy conference, as part of a larger set of results showing an association between EMF work and many different types of cancer, particularly leukemia. These findings might have passed unnoticed, because no reporter attended the conference other than me. But before the meeting the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI) sent an alert to the CEOs of its approximately 700 member utilities to warn them of new results that could "attract national attention." This, as it turns out, was a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The JHU researchers did not rush into print. They published their results only in March of 1991—sixteen months later—and only after two other groups, one in the United States and one in Norway, published similar findings. In addition, the JHU researchers identified six cases of male breast cancer—not two, as Taubes reports. The other four cases occurred outside the study period and so were excluded from the statistical analysis; but this unexpectedly large cluster of cases of such a rare disease piqued the interest of the researchers.

At this writing, five research teams have reported an association between male breast cancer and EMF. And two of these groups later reported a *female* breast cancer–EMF link. Not every epidemiological study has found this link, but the human studies are supported by a series of impressive animal and cellular experiments, along with mechanistic studies.

Why we don't know more has a lot to do with available funding. In its 1989 letter to utility CEOs, EPRI wrote that the institute was "committed to pursuing [the JHU] work objectively by providing support to outstanding researchers in the field" and cited the JHU team as an example of excellence. When the JHU researchers later asked EPRI to fund a follow-up study, however, they were turned down.

Taubes and *The Atlantic Monthly* should feel qualms about trashing the EMF–breast cancer link. Some 180,000 women will develop breast cancer this year. We are not yet sure that electromagnetic fields are a risk factor for breast cancer, but the link must be pursued aggressively. Given what we already know, I would advise people to avoid unnecessary EMF exposure.

Louis Slesin
Editor, Microwave News
New York, N.Y.

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Gary Taubes replies:

I must apologize for misquoting Louis Slesin: indeed he did not say that the bulk of EMF research is paid for by the military. What he said was that "a hundred percent of all [radiofrequency] radiation bio-effects research was paid for by the military."

Mr. Slesin also proposes that we aggressively pursue the link between electromagnetic fields and breast cancer on the basis of a handful of studies. We currently do not "know more" about this association, he says, because of "available funding." But further research does exist, continues to be generated, and is almost entirely negative. Take, for example, the Norwegian study he cites. In 1990 Tore Tynes and a group of colleagues from the Cancer Registry of Norway reported twelve cases of male breast cancer in a cohort of 38,000 workers in occupations "associated with" EMF—twice the expected number. Most of the excess was among workers in "electrical transport" fields—that is, railway workers. Tynes and his colleagues followed up this suspicious association with a study of 13,000 railway workers, which found no excess of male breast cancer—two cases total as against an expected 2.61 cases. These data were never published, Tynes told me recently. Tynes and his colleagues also studied 5,000 workers at eight Norwegian electric-power companies, and found no excess of male breast cancer. (Another recent example: the March 15, 1994, issue of the *American Journal of Epidemiology* published a twenty-year study of 223,000 Canadian and French electric-utility workers. Only seven male breast-cancer cases were observed—one case fewer than might have been expected.)

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Environment

This month a new generation of bats will be born. They are somewhat more likely than their predecessors to receive a welcome from human beings, owing to the activities of a growing conservation movement. Some 40 percent of the bats in the United States are on or are candidates for the Endangered Species List—victims of a pesticide-laden diet, fearful or irritated homeowners, cats, and even spelunkers (who may fatally disturb cave-dwelling colonies). Large numbers of bats lose their roosting places or are buried alive when abandoned mines are sealed. Recent efforts to boost bats' longevity and cachet include the preservation of a 120,000-bat "hibernaculum" in the Adirondacks and the marketing of bat-shaped chocolates (including an "Easter Bat") and a Burpee seed collection designed to attract bats—who are voracious mosquito eaters—to gardens.

The Skies

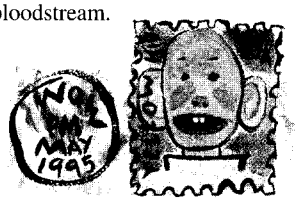
May **11**, Mercury can be seen at sunset, about a fifth of the way from the west-northwest horizon to the zenith, above and to the right of the bright star Aldebaran. This is the best opportunity of the year for observing the tiny planet, which is usually too close to the Sun to be seen. **14**, Full Moon, also known this month as the Milk or Shedding Ponies Moon. **24**, Mars and the bright star Regulus lie very close together, nearly overhead, at sunset.

Government

May **24**, the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces today submits a nonbinding report on the military's place in the post–Cold War era to Congress, the Secretary of Defense, and the Joint Chiefs of Staff; it is the largest review of the duties of the Armed Forces in nearly 50 years. The commission, an independent body, is charged with recommending which military activities should be consolidated, privatized, or redistributed, in light of the recent changes in global politics, and also with suggesting which entity should take responsibility for the training and equipping of foreign law-enforcement agencies entrusted with maintaining order in the wake of U.S. military missions abroad—activities until now delegated to various branches of the Armed Services, depending on the circumstances. Also on the agenda: the role of the services in the exploration of space, the function of Reserve and National Guard forces, and ways to improve joint combat missions.

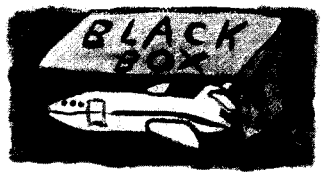
Food

The peak season for food poisoning from contaminated oysters begins in May, owing to the advent of warm water: the sixteenth-century adage urging abstinence from raw oysters during months without the letter *r* in their names has stood the test of time. Complicating the picture since its discovery in 1979 has been *Vibrio vulnificus*, a naturally occurring bacterium found in raw oysters, which can be fatal to people with AIDS, diabetes, cancer, and other immune-system-weakening conditions. The Food and Drug Administration and the Interstate Shellfish Sanitation Conference are considering measures to guard against *V. vulnificus*, but it is unlikely that any will be implemented this year. On a more hopeful note, a 1992 study suggests that the risk of contracting hepatitis A from raw oysters can be sharply decreased—almost nullified—simply by chasing the oysters with hard liquor or wine; it appears that alcohol prevents the virus from being absorbed into the bloodstream.



Arts & Letters

May **4**, today the U.S. Postal Service unveils 20 new stamps designed to commemorate one of the country's indigenous art forms—the newspaper comic strip. The stamps will feature famous cartoon characters; although the Postal Service has declined to reveal ahead of time which ones, it has more or less said that the Yellow Kid, from *Hogan's Alley*, will be among them. That strip, about life in a slum, was the first ever; its premiere was in the New York *World* on May 5, 1895. Owing to a Postal Service policy according to which, except for Presidents, those honored on stamps must have been dead for at least 10 years, the other characters will likely represent comics begun in the first 50 years of the genre, such as *Blondie, Krazy Kat,* and *Prince Valiant*, whose original creators (but not necessarily characters) are no longer alive. The stamps will go on sale in October. Also this month the New York Public Library begins a year-long celebration of its centennial with an exhibit on "What Price Freedom," which will highlight documents ranging from the Declaration of Independence to a leaflet from Tiananmen Square.

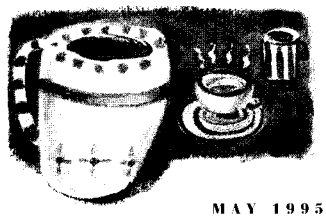


Health & Safety

May **26**, starting today the "black boxes" in many airplanes will be broadening the range of flight data they record. According to a National Transportation Safety Board ruling, planes built before October 1, 1969, must record six new parameters, including longitudinal acceleration, nose pitch, and engine thrust, for a total of 11—still a far cry from the 30 or more recorded by the newest planes. Among the planes affected by the ruling are 737s and DC-9s; investigations of recent crashes involving these planes have been hindered by a dearth of data.

50 Years Ago

M.F.K. Fisher, writing in the May, 1945, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: "It is surprising that in a country as standardized as ours we still manage to make our coffee in almost as many ways as there are people to make it. It comes in uniform jars, which we buy loyally according to which radio program hires the best writers, so that whether the label is green or scarlet the contents are safely alike, safely middling. Once in the pot, however, its individuality becomes evident, a watery monster full of venom or sweet promise, as the case may be. Coffee in a roadside waffle-joint may outdo nectar, and some made most carefully, measured and boiled just so and with the pot heated and swabbed and such according to directions, may be a loathsome brew in my best friend's kitchen."



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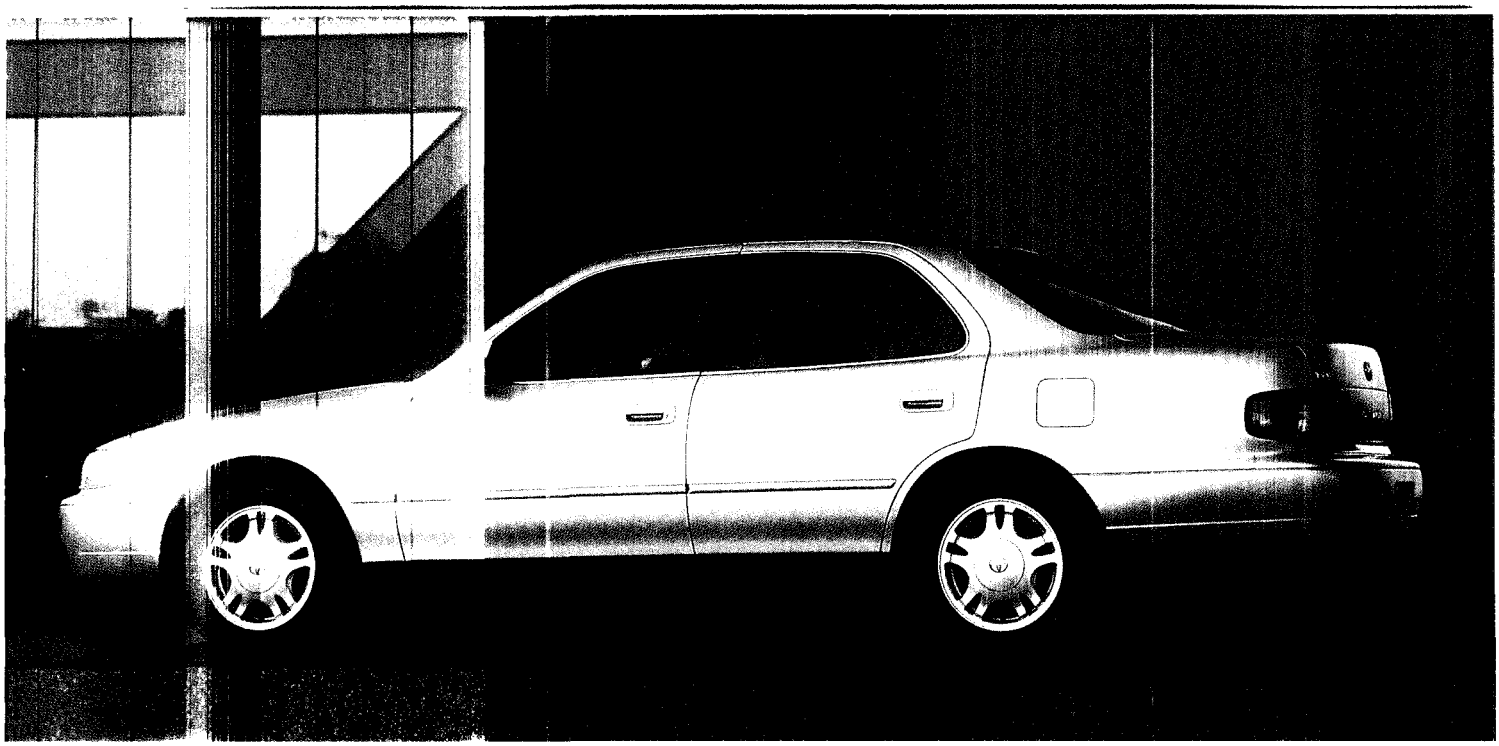

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The Lay of the Language

The decline of a semantic distinction, and what it suggests about linguistic evolution

by Cullen Murphy

THE year was 842. The occasion was a meeting in Strasbourg between two grandsons of Charlemagne, Louis the German and Charles the Bald, to form an alliance against a third grandson, Lothar I. That alliance was embodied in what are known today as the Strasbourg Oaths, and for linguistic reasons these oaths remain significant. The scribe, fluent in Latin, wrote out copies of the oaths in two languages, the German spoken by Louis and the Latinate tongue spoken by Charles. The language of Charles looks odd (it is written out phonetically according to Latin rules of spelling), but it is unmistakably the language that is now called French. Here is why it is important: the French version of the Strasbourg Oaths is the earliest extant written evidence that classical Latin, once a standardized international language, had evolved into several vernaculars.

In thinking about the probable successors to the English language, I have often wondered what form their equivalents of the Strasbourg Oaths might take. An MTV video? An FBI wiretap transcript? Inevitably, I have also wondered when these new vernaculars will come into existence. Do candidates already exist somewhere? Certainly, as John Platt and his colleagues document in their book *The New Englishes*, distinctive variants of the mother tongue have by now emerged in India, Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Philippines, though in each case the speech so far remains recognizably English. Most of us would acknowledge, I think, that a certain drifting from the anchorage of standards has been taking place, too, among native speakers of English, and even among those who would consider themselves members of the elite.

I don't mean to be schoolmarmish about this. I want simply to note a phenomenon, and perhaps take the long view. A few years ago, in his inaugural lecture as occupant of the Chair of Latin at the University of Newcastle upon Tyne, Professor J. G. F. Powell took such a view of both Latin and English, drawing instructive parallels. The English written by his students, he said, "reminds me forcibly of some of the Latin written during the Dark Ages, after the collapse of the Western Empire and of the old Roman education." And Powell observed that although the emergence of the Romance vernaculars was a long and gradual process, subtle signs of it can be found with the benefit of hindsight even in the classical period. The spelling and grammar in papyrus letters written by an imperial soldier named Claudius Terentianus "already in some ways foreshadows modern Italian." The misspelling of the name "Caesar" as "Cessar" on some banking records from Pompeii suggests that pronunciation had begun to change.

▪ ▪ ▪

It is against this background that I call attention to the rapid and, I suspect, inexorable conflation of the once-distinct English verbs *lie* and *lay*. *Lie* is an intransitive verb, used correctly in constructions like "*lie* down" and "*lie* around" and "the laundry *lies* on the bed." The present participle is *lying*, the past tense is *lay*, and the past participle is *lain*. *Lay*, for its part, is a transitive verb, used correctly in constructions like "*lay* plans" and "*lay* the books on the shelf." The present participle is *laying*, the past tense is *laid*, and the past participle is also *laid*.

The two verbs are long-standing rivals, but during the past few decades *lay* has been laying siege to *lie* with growing success. In spoken language the victory of *lay* is virtually complete. "Whenever I smell a cigar now," David Letterman told a reporter for the *Los Angeles Daily News*, "I almost just *lay* down and go to

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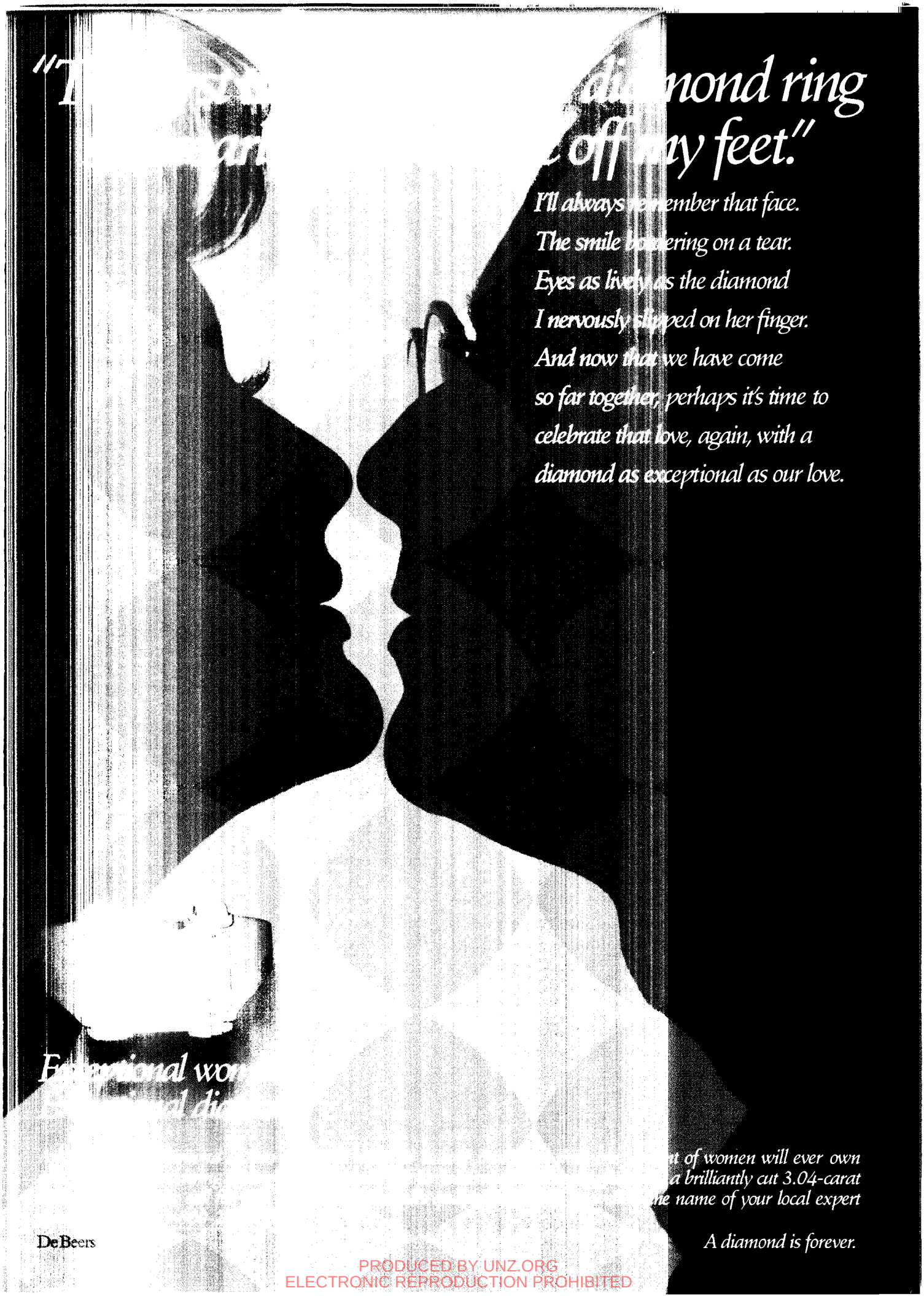

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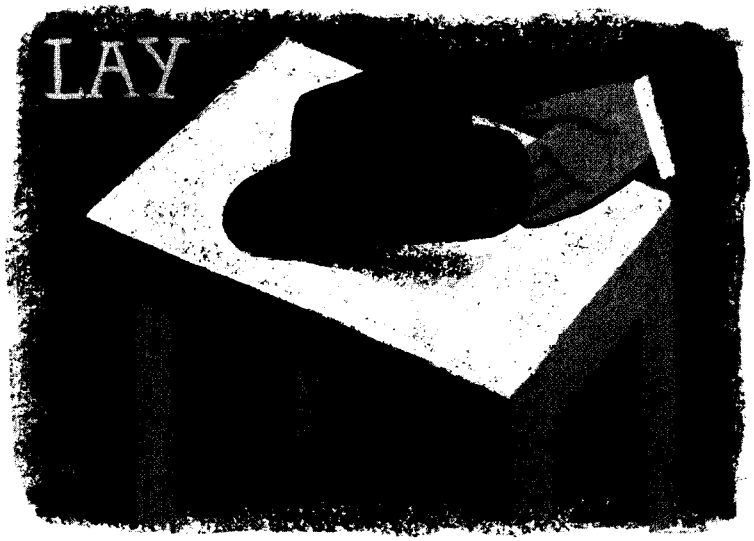
sleep, they smell so good." "Election years are hell for the Fed," a former president of one of the regional Federal Reserve banks told a *Washington Post* columnist. "They just hope they can *lay* low, and not be accused of going in one direction or another until after Election Day." Speaking about his fellow Democrats after last November's Republican surge, Representative Kweisi Mfume told the *Los Angeles Times*, "Many have just *laid* down and rolled over; they just cannot get over the fact we've lost control of the House." Increasingly, the substitution of *lay* for *lie* and *laid* for *lain* is occurring not only in casual speech but also in printed matter produced by professional writers and editors; you'll quickly collect plenty of examples if you keep an eye out for them. A few months ago an advertisement appeared in these very pages bearing the words "This Christmas give a gift that's been *laying* around for twelve years"—a lapse that elicited irate letters from a number of readers. "If my subscription were not a gift from my mother," one woman wrote, "I would cancel it because of the English in this ad."

The conflation of *lie* and *lay* is an old problem and, admittedly, an understandable one. Among other things, the verbs share a manifestation (*lay*). Moreover, when you *lay* something down, you cause it to *lie*. Also, there was once a reflexive pronominal use of *lay* (as in "Now I *lay* me down to sleep . . ."), which has undoubtedly sown confusion. And *lie* and *lay* as nouns, connoting a configuration of ground, can at times be used interchangeably ("the *lie* or *lay* of the land"). Before the nineteenth century the verbs *lie* and *lay* were sometimes used synonymously, by such writers as Francis Bacon and Laurence Sterne, and the *Oxford English Dictionary* has citations for an intransitive use of *lay* going back to roughly A.D. 1300. Still, the *lie-lay* distinction has been generally in force for the past two centuries, as grammarians and lexicographers pulled English into something approaching a standardized form.



Why is the distinction vanishing? One person I know blames the lyrics of pop and country music: "Lay down Sally." "Lay, lady, lay, lay across my big brass bed." "I could get used to you, oh darlin', you're so fine. I could grow accustomed to your body layin' right next to mine." Lyrics like these obviously do play a role, but something larger is at work. I observed above that in spoken language the victory of *lay* over *lie* has been decisive. Until the invention of movable type and the advent of mass literacy the influence of the spoken word was at least equal to and probably greater than that of the written word when it came to determining the evolution of language. Gutenberg altered the balance of power. With the help of the printing press, language could more easily be tamed, domesticated, made to live by rules across vast areas. The printed word was sovereign for four centuries. It brought standardized English to every continent. But ever since the development, a hundred years ago, of electronic methods of reproducing sound, the spoken word has been roaring back. By comparison with the written word, it has always been sloppy and unruly—a fact of modest consequence in, say, the ninth century, when even the most influential person's voice could reach only a very small audience. Today audiences for words that are spoken (or sung) can easily exceed a billion. Next to this, print is a marginal force. The one place in which the written word is enjoying any sort of renaissance—in communications by means of computer—offers no counterforce whatsoever. As anyone familiar with it can attest, cyberEnglish is characterized by a penchant for grammatical laxity and semantic shorthand.

▪ ▪ ▪

Our language, then, is embarked upon a period in which we may well be watching it—and hearing it—change faster than it ever has changed before. What is odd is that so many of its professional custodians seem prepared to take this, as one might say, laying down. On the issue of *lie* versus *lay*, for example, the editors of *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary of English Usage* point out in a survey of reference works that the scholarly consensus seems to have shifted from deeming the misuse "illiterate" to deeming it "disputable" to deeming it, in essence, irrelevant. The linguist Dwight Bolinger offers this verdict: "The *lie/lay* distinction is fragile and impractical, and the price of maintaining it is too high." This, of course, is the attitude we have come to expect on all such language issues, though I must confess that some of the ways it surfaces can still take me by surprise. Recently Professor Richard Hogg, the general editor of the *Cambridge History of the English Language*, suggested that the apostrophe "may well just decline of its own accord" and stated outright that he "would not go to the stake" to preserve the distinction between *its* and *it's*.

Language changes. Linguistic rules are arbitrary. I concede all that. It is instructive to note, though, that 1,519 years after the Fall of Rome the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne has someone on its faculty who could have conversed with an educated citizen of the Roman Empire. In A.D. 3514, I wonder, will there be anyone who could have conversed with me?

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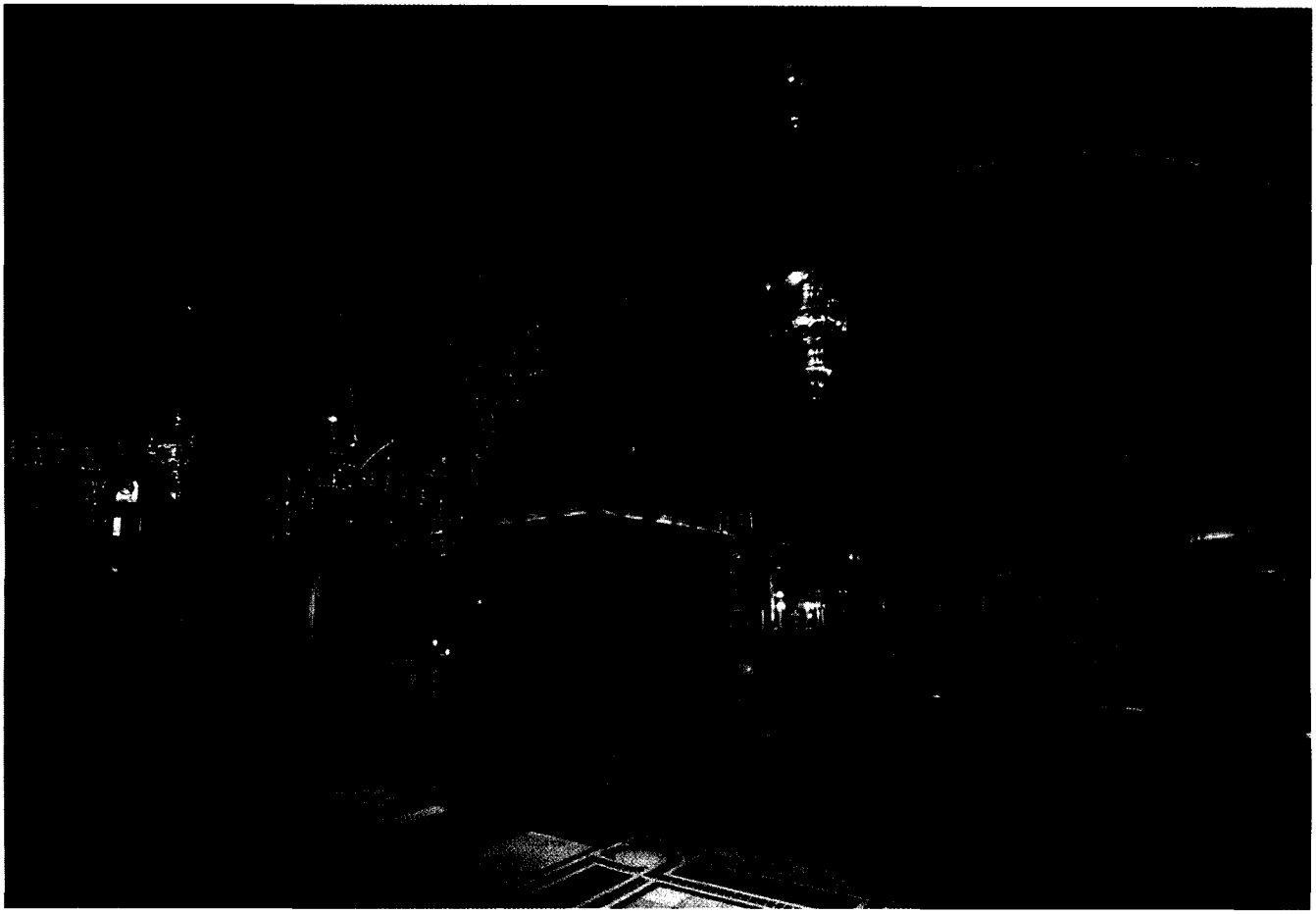

GARO NALBANDIAN/ASAP

The Jerusalem Syndrome

Each year a number of travelers to Jerusalem become convinced that they themselves are the Messiah or the Virgin or King David or God or Satan

by Rebecca Lee

A WOMAN who believes she is the Virgin Mary enters the Old City through the Jaffa Gate. She is dressed in drab Western clothes, a nondescript skirt and blouse. It is dawn in Jerusalem. An Arab boy jumps out at her and gestures toward two cross, spitting camels on the sidewalk. "Would you like to ride, miss? Would you like to ride George Bush, or his wife, Michael Jackson?" Mary smiles and touches the boy on the head as she passes.

She enters the long, snaking alleys of the Arab marketplace, walks serenely through, and shakes her head no to every treasure offered—a T-shirt depicting Yasser Arafat with an olive branch in his mouth, a vial of sand from the Dead Sea, a velvet rug depicting the Last Supper. She turns left into the Christian Quarter and then passes out of the sunlight into the perpetual cool and duskiness of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is built on the hill where Jesus is believed to have been crucified. So many Christian sects lay claim to this church that the noise inside can be chillingly chaotic, all the competing services rising into a din of religious exhortation, a sound one might expect at the Tower of Babel. The geographic heart of Christendom in the summer of 1994 is deeply discordant, wild, dysfunctional.

Once inside the church, Mary veers right and ascends the stairs to the Room of Pity; it is lined with glass mosaics, one of which shows Jesus' body flung in various positions of distress. The room is dark; its windows are of milky glass, as if faithful to the biblical metaphor "For

Chapel of the Nailing to the Cross, Church of the Holy Sepulchre

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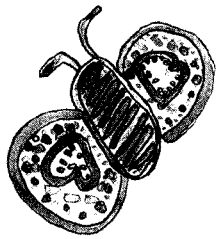

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–Ancient Proverb

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now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face."

Mary pauses before the altar at Golgotha, said to be the exact place of crucifixion. She stands silent for a moment. Then suddenly she kneels, and as her knees strike the cool floor, her face distorts and she cries out, sharply. She lays her face on the floor and begins to sob desperately. Her day has begun.

ELIEZER Witztum, a cheerful man, is an expert on sadness. He is a professor of psychiatry at Beersheva Mental Health Center, specializing in despair, disorientation, and grief. "It is not effective to tell somebody she is not the Virgin," he says to me, referring to Mary. Witztum counsels people like Mary, who suffer from a psychological disorder colloquially called the Jerusalem Syndrome, an affliction peculiar to travelers to Jerusalem who snap under the historical and religious weight of the city and begin to believe that they themselves are the Messiah or the Virgin or King David or, more commonly, God or Satan. Many of these people have strikingly similar spiritual histories: a deeply religious childhood followed by an adolescent rebellion against their faith and an eventual falling away. Backsliders appear to be far more vulnerable to the syndrome, because their image of Jerusalem is sometimes drawn in a child's hand, unamended by adult reasoning.

The sufferers are of two types—those who arrive with a history of psychological problems and those without any record of problems.

The sufferers are of two types—those who arrive in Jerusalem with a history of psychological or behavioral problems and those without any sign or record of past psychiatric problems. The former group comprises 82 percent of the sufferers, according to Witztum. But those in the latter group, who are exhibiting what psychiatrists call the syndrome proper, are the more perplexing of the two types. Most believe for an average of five to seven days that they are some form of divinity; then they step back into the milder religious atmosphere of America or Europe as if nothing had happened. Of these, most are surprisingly responsive to therapy. Witztum described one such patient who spoke of the experience as being rather like intoxication. In the summer of 1986 he entered the Holy Sepulchre and was overcome by the feeling that he was Jesus. When he began sharing this conviction aloud with his tour group, he was taken to Kfar Shaul psychiatric hospital, where he was treated by the hospital's director, Yair Bar El. Within five days he was fine. He returned to his homeland, got married, and remains baffled about what happened. He is extraordinarily polite, as are many of the victims of the syndrome proper, most of whom don't rant but simply worry that they might be Jesus.

The former patient would like to return to Jerusalem for a visit but worries that the syndrome will strike again—as if Jerusalem were the problem. Witztum concurs. "This case was a reaction to a place, not a true psychosis," he says. In a new entry on the syndrome in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the question is asked, "Does Jerusalem's religious atmosphere actually *induce* psychiatric disturbance in the vulnerable visitor?" Though there is no definitive answer yet, Witztum believes that the "unique atmosphere" of Jerusalem together with the complexities of the human psyche may be more than some travelers can manage.

In order to explain the syndrome, Witztum differentiates between pilgrims and tourists. A tourist moves from the center of his existence, his home, to the periphery, in order to vacation. A pilgrim, however, moves from the periphery to the center of his world. Perhaps the best definition of "center" in this context was given by the religious historian Mircea Eliade, who wrote that the center is where the "axis mundi [the center axis of meaning] penetrates the earthly sphere."

Once a tiny hilltop fortification, Jerusalem has come to be the axis mundi for three of the world's major religions, where heaven descends to touch and bless the earth; Witztum calls the city "the umbilical cord of the world." Its hilltop location conferred a religious superiority on Jerusalem at a time when military and spiritual might were indistinguishable. "Their gods are gods of the hills," the ancients said of Jerusalem in the first chapter of Kings, "so they were stronger than we." This inaccessibility also lent Jerusalem a rugged, evocative aura for pilgrims, an aura that persists to this day.

In every century of the city's history many who have considered themselves its rightful citizens have been forced to live in exile. In the eleventh century, after the Crusaders massacred most of the city's Jews and Muslims and sent the rest of them scattering through the surrounding region, the author Judah ha-Levi wrote, "My heart is in the East, and I am in the depths of the West. My food has no taste. How can it be sweet?"

To live apart from one's center is, of course, psychologically disturbing, but the disorder that Witztum and Bar El have been elucidating over the past thirteen years is one that indicates how psychologically troubling it can be to enter or return to one's center. The center often cannot hold the weight of human longing. The place is either disappointing or overwhelming, and travelers frequently break down, to varying degrees. Witztum has said, "It's a problem of inner geography."

THE Church of the Holy Sepulchre is partitioned among fractious sects—Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian Catholic, the Coptic Church, Ethiopian Orthodox, and Syrian Orthodox. The church is darkly beautiful and musty, almost rank. It is in an endless state of disrepair, with scaffolding everywhere, because the sects can rarely agree on how to proceed. If a building can be said to reveal the personality of its owner, then the Holy Sepulchre reveals Christianity to be quarrelsome, mysterious, and alluring. It is a breeding ground for this particular form of insanity—this manifestation of the human soul reaching toward the divine.

The fixation has been around for centuries. In fact, one of the philosophical leaders of the early Crusades, a man named Peter the Hermit, may have been profoundly affected by Jerusalem on a pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre from his native France. After the trip he claimed

(Continued on page 34)

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MAY
1995

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT PREVIEW

Dance
An International Festival of Ballet

Theater
Ralph Fiennes Plays the Prince

Film
Prizewinners From Sundance and Toronto

Jazz
J. J. Johnson Slides Back Sweetly

Pop
James McMurtry's Texas Tales

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Dance and Theater

BY AUSTIN BAER AND LAURA JACOBS

GLOBAL FARE

The student of sociology couldn't work a more interesting angle than to survey the world's ballet companies, where distinctions of style can be so truffle-fine that they require a lifetime's connoisseurship, or so pepper-coarse that they could make you sneeze. Ah, but the travel expenses . . . Well, in May the San Francisco Ballet is host to "UNited We Dance: An International Festival" (May 9–14; call 415-865-2000). Thirteen companies are now on

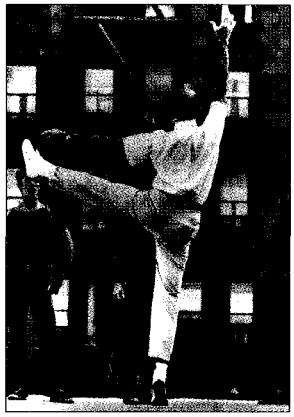
RIGMOR MYOTSKOV

The Royal Danish Ballet's *A Folk Tale*

the bill—including The Bolshoi Ballet, The National Ballet of Cuba, Britain's Rambert Dance Company, and more—and each has been asked to perform a newly commissioned work by a native choreographer. The Royal Danish Ballet is a part of the line-up, and will also be performing its classics, *La Sylphide* and *A Folk Tale*, at the Orange County Performing Arts Center (May 23–28; call 714-740-2000). **—L.J.**

WEST SIDE ROBBINS RUMBLE

The ballet step we associate with *West Side Story* is a leap *à la seconde, en face.* You know the move: the gang guys jump with one leg thrust out to the side. Is there a boy in America who hasn't tried to jeté like a Jet? That's the Jerome Robbins magic! He isn't a great Broadway choreographer just because he crafts exceedingly coherent dances; he also makes a number look natural, so that audiences don't feel hemmed in by the highfalutin. *West Side Story*, of course, was a brilliant collaboration (other stars on the project were Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim), but the edge and brio of Robbins's dances gave the work its artful charge, its energy spiral. This month the *West Side Story Suite* has its premiere at New York City Ballet's Spring Gala (May 18, with five more performances through June 4; call 212-870-5570). Robbins, a legendary perfectionist, is setting the main dances from the original show, which include the "Prologue," "Dance at the Gym," "America," "The Rumble," and the "Somewhere Ballet," seen as a tantalizing tidbit in *Jerome Robbins' Broadway.* To have all five dances? All one can say is "Cool, boy." **—L.J.**



UPI/BETTMANN

Robbins *en jeté*

LESSONS OF THE MASTER

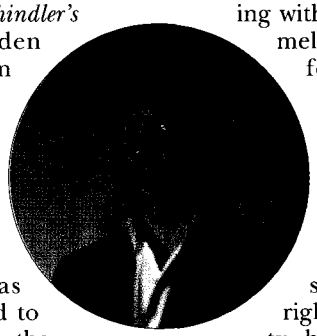
"She took my breath away. She wasn't just a voice on a record. I was on the same planet at the same moment in time as Maria Callas. The rest of the evening passed like a dream, a dream I remember more clearly than the color of my lover's eyes." Thus Stephen, the obsessed romantic of *The Lisbon Traviata*, recalls the first time he saw his goddess in the theater, and plainly he is speaking for his creator, Terrence McNally. The playwright has given the diva a second memorial: *Master Class*, starring Zoe Caldwell as Callas, imparting her wisdom to a trio of aspiring singers. The diva actually gave such classes, and a thrilling recording of them survives: *Maria Callas at Juilliard: The Masterclasses* (EMI). But that document is not a play, and McNally's purpose transcends impersonation. Always blessed in his actors, he needs a sorceress this time. Luckily Caldwell, like Callas, has been a towering Medea. Her Callas, unveiled at the Philadelphia Theatre Company in February, reaches the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles this month (May 7–June 25; call 213-972-0700). Engagements in Washington, D.C., and on Broadway are planned for the fall. **—A.B.**

JOAN MARCUS

Zoe Caldwell (right) as Maria Callas

PRINCE HAMLET, AND MEANT TO BE

Before movie audiences met Ralph Fiennes as the satanic Nazi commander of *Schindler's List* and the evasive golden boy of *Quiz Show*, London knew his mesmerizing presence from the rival stages of both royal flagship troupes. In February the challengers at London's Almeida Theatre Company brought him back to the stage as Hamlet. Now, transferred to Broadway for a limited run, the Almeida production marks the actor's American stage debut (Belasco Theatre, May 2–July 22; call 212-239-6200). To borrow a phrase from the prince, there's a "special providence" at work. Actors fly to Shakespeare's most elusive hero like moths to a flame, flirting with fatality, but in truth the melancholy Dane is the most forgiving of roles. (Only Alec Guinness seems to have gone up in smoke.) Rife with contradictions, he is the player's Rorschach test: endlessly revealing, impossible to get wrong. But Fiennes should actually get him right. A noble, nervous beauty, he hovers in twilight between tenderness and cruelty. Into riddles of plot he pours deeper mysteries of character, resting his gaze on innocence and corruption with the opaque cunning of a sphinx. **—A.B.**



IVAN KYNCL

Ralph Fiennes

Austin Baer is a writer based in New York. Laura Jacobs is editor in chief of Stagebill.

COVER ILLUSTRATION BY EMILY LISKER

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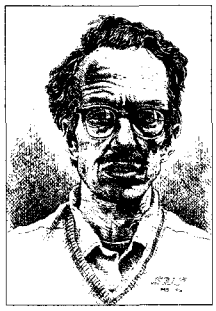
Film

BY ELLA TAYLOR

ART OR ILLNESS? A FILMMAKER'S LOOK AT AN UNSETTLING TALENT

LEFT: TOM BALLINGER; RIGHT: ROBERT CRUMB



Director Terry Zwigoff (left) with Crumb; the artist's self-portrait

In one Robert Crumb comic strip a white suburban family settles down to a quiet afternoon of incest and opens a can of "nigger hearts" for dinner. In another a decapitated woman is being anally raped by a grinning man who can't complete the act because a vision of her severed head withers him into detumescence. Art or hate speech? Both? Twenty-five years ago, when Crumb skewered postwar complacency by inverting Norman Rockwell's insanely normal America into an insanely aberrant one, he became hero to a counterculture as yet unrevised by feminism and multi-culti politics.

Today Crumb lives in more ambivalent times. Terry Zwigoff's riveting documentary, *Crumb*, which won both the Grand Jury and cinematography prizes in its category at this year's Sundance Film Festival, shows us art critic Robert Hughes hailing Crumb as a twentieth-century Breughel, while former *Mother Jones* editor Deirdre English purses her lips at his "arrested juvenile vision." Uncluttered by commentary, Zwigoff's artful shifts between Crumb's life and his work reinvigorate the cliché of the artist as pathological outsider. "Dysfunctional" doesn't begin to describe the Crumb family—an all-American father (now dead) with a gift for domestic tyranny, a pack-rat recluse of a mother, and three talented brothers, all hobbled and inspired by the hatred that oozes through their drawings. Unlike his brothers—one of whom remains at home, doped to the eyeballs with tranquilizers and anti-depressants, while the other meditates on a bed of nails to keep his warped sexuality in check—Robert has parlayed his outsider's rage into success. His comics—*Keep on Truckin'*, *Cheap Thrills*, and *Fritz the Cat*—have been recycled into mainstream pop culture. What may have saved Crumb from the ineffectuality that cripples his brothers is a monstrous detachment that allows him to snicker (nervously, I hope) as he sits beside his eldest brother, itemizing the man's breakdowns and suicide attempts; to rhapsodize over one of his comic strips, which he admits is "sickening"; to answer "What do I care?" when asked about his feelings upon leaving his brothers to live in France. Under Zwigoff's steady gaze Crumb emerges as a genuinely callow man who has created a genuinely callow art that dares us to pass judgment on its bracingly divisive vision. Okay, here goes: I'm glad it's there. I hate it.

CONFESSIONS OF CLOTH AND COMMUNITY

MIRAMAX FILMS

When a handsome young priest, stiff with Catholic dogma, walks into an English parish with a 60 percent unemployment rate and announces that society is not to blame for urban ills, you know he'll be brought to his knees by the combined forces of the well-intended liberal movie. Before Father Greg (Linus Roache) can say "original sin," the people of Liverpool test his high mind with all manner of human error. His older colleague is a libertarian activist who is shacked up with the housekeeper. A troubled schoolgirl confides that her father is sexually abusing her, forcing Father Greg to decide whether to violate the sanctity of confession and speak out. His own covert homosexuality precipitates a crisis that compels him to re-examine the relationship between doctrine and life. It's easy to see why *Priest* received standing ovations at film festivals in Park City and Toronto (where it won the audience prize). Director Antonia Bird is the most skilled of rabble-rousers, rushing us from comedy to melodrama and back again in a roller-coaster diatribe against hypocrisy. I enjoyed the ride, but came away feeling manipulated—for *Priest* is as intellectually slippery as it is emotionally thrilling. The movie stacks the deck with loathsome Church high-ups and fudges difficult questions about what it might mean for religious leaders to jettison their own rules as needed. At Park City the director proclaimed the film "a celebration of Catholicism but a questioning of its rules and hierarchies." By the end of Bird's demolition derby there's precious little Catholicism left standing.

Linus Roache

Ella Taylor is a film critic for Mirabella.

FAULTY FOUNDER

For a movie about sexual transgression, *Jefferson in Paris* is fatally low on libido, which is odd given that it's about Thomas Jefferson carrying on with his black slave Sally Hemings while he was blessing the French Revolution. This lavish, lumbering Merchant-Ivory biopic has Nick Nolte moping around looking pre-presidential, Greta Scacchi (as his platonic squeeze) simpering lines like "Wherever he is, he is what he is," and Sally (Thandie Newton) seducing her master with chicken imitations. The inventor of the guillotine beheads a stick of asparagus. Can Monty Python be far behind?

Nick Nolte and Thandie Newton

A. BORREL

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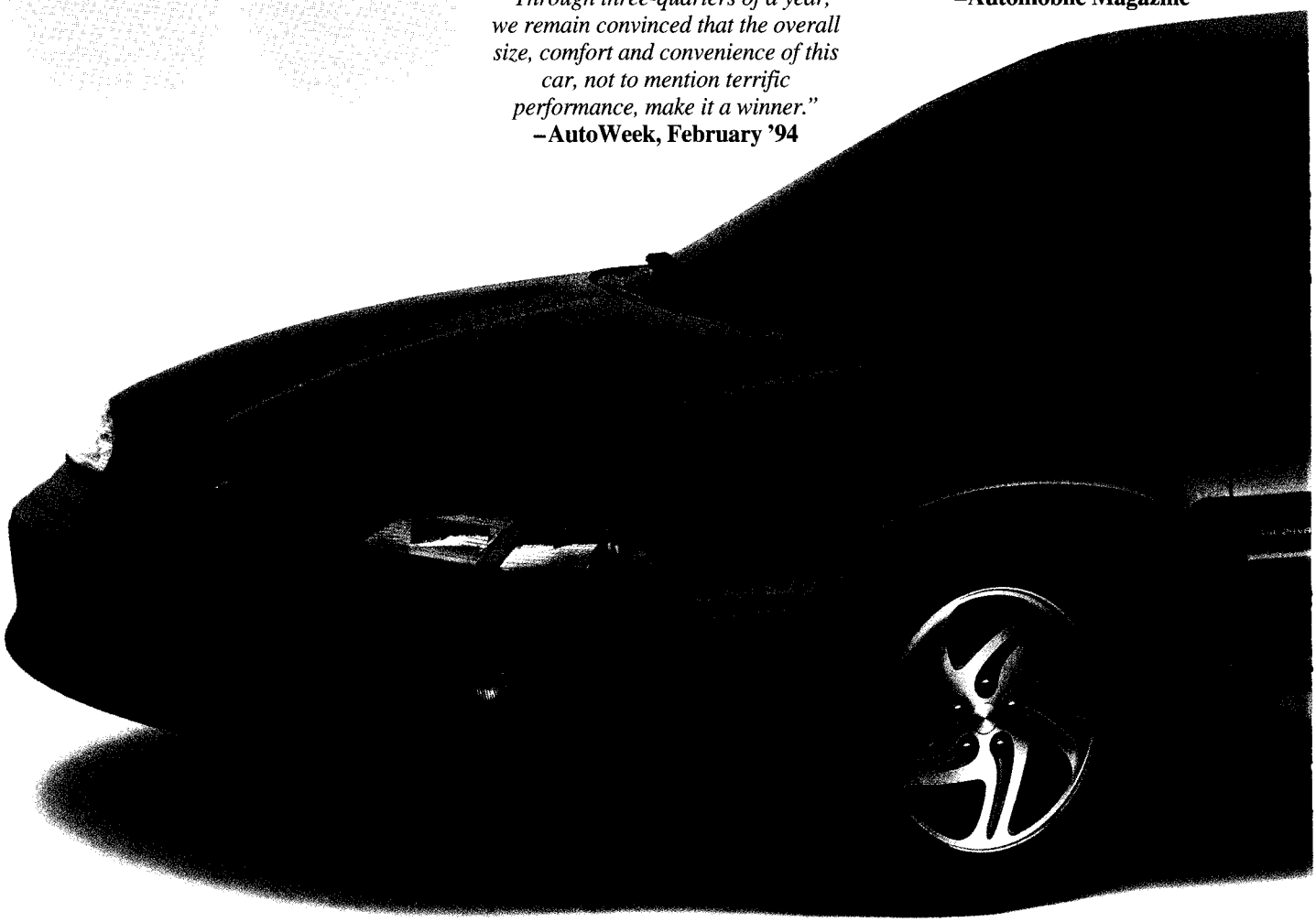

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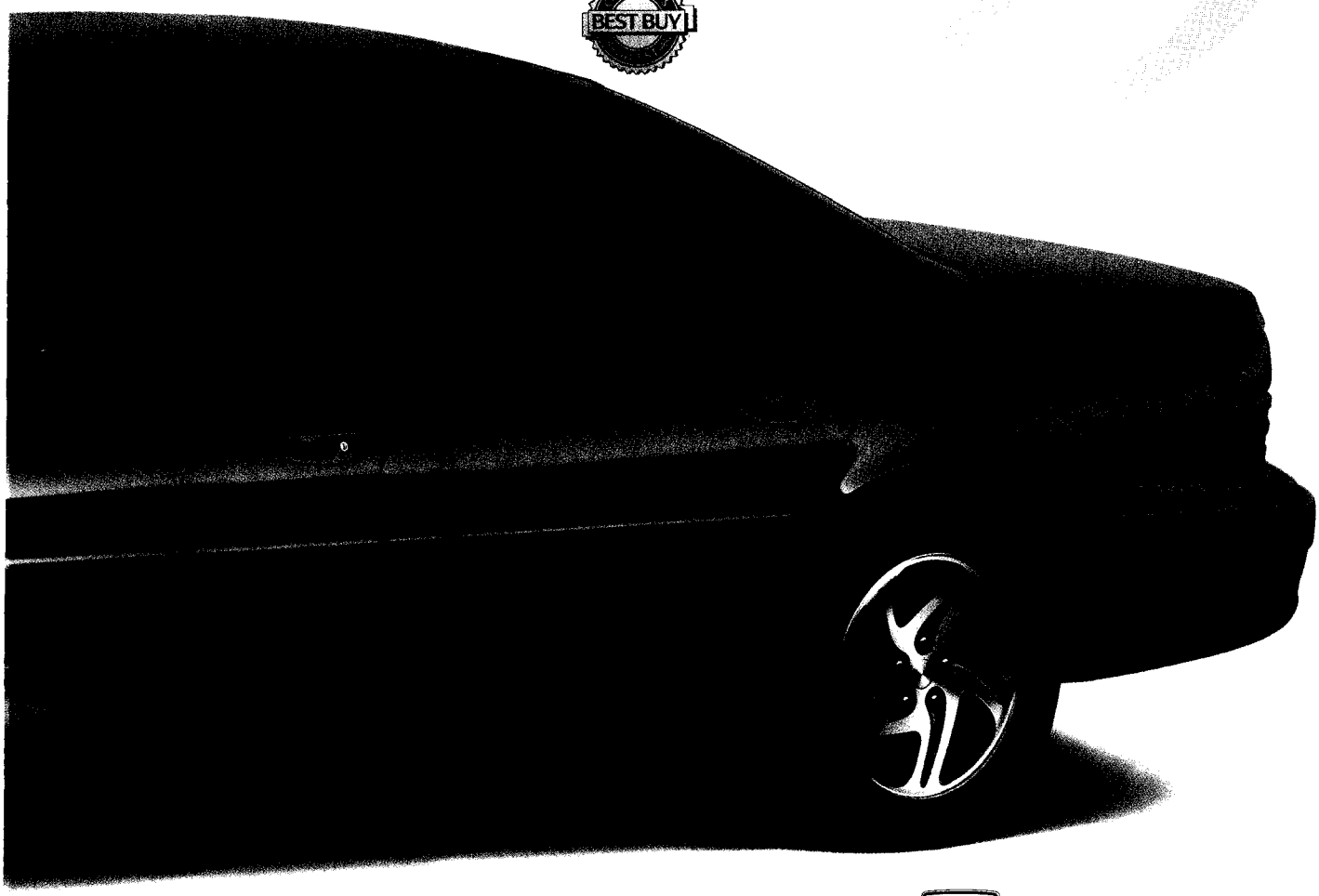

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Popular Music and Jazz

BY BOB BLUMENTHAL AND CHARLES M. YOUNG

GENERATION SWING

Ever since the guitar took over popular music, in the mid-fifties, true believers have been predicting the return of big-band swing every few months. This hasn't happened, but for anyone who came of age in the thirties and forties, big-band swing never went away. *Big Bands in Hi-Fi: Volume 1—Let's Dance* (Capitol) specifically addresses that market, but anyone else with open ears and restless feet ought to give a listen. Part of the problem in translating the big-band experience to other generations is that the big bands had their hits on 78 rpm sin-

COURTESY OF CAPITOL RECORDS

Duke Ellington and Count Basie

gles, a decidedly lo-fi technology. Although the world is hardly lacking in big-band anthologies these days, most of them just don't sound that good. A two-CD set including forty-six songs divided about equally between fast jitterbugs and medium foxtrots, with an occasional slow dance, *Big Bands* concentrates on recordings made in the fifties and sixties, when technology had finally caught up to Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, and Count Basie. Eager to expand their audiences, and still at the peak of their musical powers, they re-recorded their hits for the LP format, and those hits have been digitally remastered for CD. You hear *all* the detail. It's hard to imagine even a punk rocker addicted to snarling guitars who could deny the power of this stuff. And if you're throwing a party for people in their sixties and up, you'll have them stompin' at the Savoy and jumpin' at the Woodside, even if they don't get around much anymore. **—C.M.Y.**

Bob Blumenthal is a jazz critic for The Boston Globe *and* CD Review.
Charles M. Young reviews popular music for Playboy, Musician, *and other publications.*

SESSIONS WITH THE BIG BRASS

The bebop trombone innovator J. J. Johnson was hidden in Hollywood, composing for films and television, for more than two decades. Now he is back playing, and is once again the dominant personality on his instrument. *Tangence* (Verve) finds Johnson, at age seventy, still technically astounding and focused on ballad playing. The British arranger Robert Farnon, a favorite among jazz musicians for his keenly nuanced string orchestrations, surrounds Johnson with scores of dramatic sinew; and the trombonist responds in kind. The program leans toward overlooked gems like "People Time," "Dinner for One, Please, James," and Johnson's classic "Lament." Wynton Marsalis, who guests

JEAN-MARC LUBRANO

The maestro: J. J. Johnson

on three tracks, is particularly effective as he and Johnson, sans orchestra, recreate the Jimmie Lunceford flagwaver "For Dancers Only."

Among younger trombonists Steve Turre has shown the most versatility and personality. Appearing weekly in the *Saturday Night Live* band, he has also turned the conch shell into a legitimate instrument. His interests in Latin, African, and jazz music blend on *Rhythm Within* (Antilles), featuring a compact brass choir in which each member also plays shells. Turre mixes strong dance grooves and lyrical interludes, and has written pungent originals that display his extroverted warmth. Like Johnson, Turre employs guest stars, including the pianist Herbie Hancock and the trumpeter Jon Faddis. Both are upstaged by the veteran trombonist Britt Woodman, four years Johnson's senior, who brings the horn's vocal qualities to the fore on the spectacularly funky "Since I Fell for You." **—B.B.**

MESSING WITH TEXAS

James McMurtry sings a little like Bob Dylan, a little like John Prine, a little like Lou Reed, and a lot like he just ate a bottle of Valium: laid back and slurred. It's a voice that takes all the adrenaline out of your bloodstream, so you can lie back and get thoughtful about the short stories that make up his songs on *Where'd You Hide the Body?* (Columbia). Backed by some of Austin's musical aristocracy (Don Dixon on bass and keyboards, David Grissom on guitar), McMurtry doesn't quite rock and roll; he keeps the instruments subdued, so that the lyrics shine foremost in the mix. And that's exactly where his lyrics ought to be. He has a sharp eye for telling detail and some serious doubts about Texas as a culture. In "Levelland" he wonders why his ancestors settled in such a flat and dusty place. In the song he can't wait to get out of there, but in reality he likes to write about the inhabitants too much to leave. That sort of ambivalence informs the whole album, and it's an ambivalence that resonates far beyond Texas. **—C.M.Y.**

JIMMY JENNER, JR.

James McMurtry

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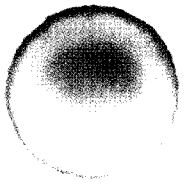

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(Continued from page 26)
that Christ had appeared to him in the Holy Sepulchre and had given him authorization to start the Crusades. In the early eleventh century, while the Pope was summoning the nobility and upper classes to begin a military campaign to spread Christianity and drive the Turks from Asia Minor, Peter the Hermit was galvanizing the desperately poor, intoxicating them with the idea of Jerusalem, a pseudo-heavenly place on earth, a place where, as in heaven, they would be rewarded for their suffering.

Since then the Holy Sepulchre has attracted a long line of pilgrims who have abandoned their own identities in search of divinity. The medieval world produced great waves of messiahs, many of whom were able to gather huge followings. Warrior messiahs inspired the crazed, relentless horror of the Crusades; flagellant leaders, who saw in their bruised bodies the image of the suffering Christ, were able to persuade thousands of people to beat themselves until their flesh was blue and swollen; and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, who were a sort of creepy, reckless antecedent to New Age theology, persuaded their followers that because the inner man was perfected already, the outer man could be wildly promiscuous, slothful, even murderous.

Along with the Church of the Holy Sepulchre the wilderness around Jerusalem is probably one of the most frequent breakdown spots.

Not until 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his theses against the sale of indulgences to the door of the Wittenberg church, did the authority of messiahs begin to wane. Luther proclaimed that every man had a direct line to God, and as his view won converts, it became increasingly difficult for messiahs to gather followings. At the same time, the sheer number of messiahs grew dramatically. The religious historian Norman Cohn has written that with Luther's Reformation, "once the layman began to feel that he himself stood face to face with God and to rely for guidance on his individual conscience, it was inevitable that some laymen should claim divine promptings."

IN the desert surrounding Jerusalem barrenness and abundance share the same strange landscape. This is the location of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness, when his true identity as the Messiah dawned on him. According to nonbelievers or skeptical believers, as discussed by Albert Schweitzer in his book *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus*, this wilderness is where Jesus made the transition from "the latent to the active stage of paranoia." In a landscape whose religious history was already rich with the myth and delusions of John the Baptist, Schweitzer claimed, Jesus' psyche exploded into the divine, and never recovered. Ever since, people from all over the world have traveled to this wilderness and felt prophetic, messianic glimmerings within themselves.

Lawrence of Arabia wrote that since Christianity, Judaism, and Islam were "assertions, not arguments," they required many prophets to further their credos. These prophets, he claimed, were often forged in the desert.

> None of them had been of the wilderness; but their lives were after a pattern. Their birth set them in crowded places. An unintelligible passionate yearning drove them out into the desert. There they lived a greater or lesser time in meditation and physical abandonment; and thence they returned with their imagined message articulate.

ALONG with the Holy Sepulchre, the wilderness around Jerusalem is probably one of the most frequent breakdown spots. I say "probably" because the statistics are sketchy. ("Messiahs don't like to sit around filling out forms," Witztum told a reporter from *The New York Times*.) Members of the Israeli Army, should they find a European or an American wandering in bed sheets, looking for locusts and wild honey, know to take him to Kfar Shaul, high on the northwest edge of Jerusalem. If Jesus came again to Jerusalem, this is perhaps where he'd be taken. It is surely the world's most exotic—and fragrant—psychiatric hospital.

Kfar Shaul, formerly an Arab village, is divided into many small, terraced stone homes, which are connected by twisting pathways. The entire village smells like perfume, because of the wild, tall gardens everywhere, and there are hundreds of trees—fig, pomegranate, crab apple. The hospital is in the middle of a drab, vaguely industrial part of Jerusalem, so to step through its gates is like stepping into the Garden of Eden.

In almost any waiting room at Kfar Shaul a visitor can read about dozens of travelers who came to the Old City, went through a brief divine intoxication, and then returned to their own lives. A kindergarten teacher believes for a week that she is pregnant with the new Messiah, and then returns to Maine—to her husband and job—and doesn't say a word about it. A pastor from the Midwest goes on a tour of the Holy Land with his wife and, as he stands at Golgotha, acquires a fierce belief that he is Jesus returned to earth. After five days he returns to the Midwest, to his pulpit; among the parishioners listening to him, only his wife, still bewildered, knows about his brief fling with divinity. A computer programmer from New York City, a young man, visits Jerusalem in June of 1994 and is suddenly seized by the worry that he *might* be Jesus; if so, what should he do? In the medieval world his path would have been clearer: he could have gathered some followers and thrust himself into the divine limelight. In the modern world, however, divinity like his, once so integral to the life and history of the Church, is now anachronistic, its purpose phased out long ago.

I SEE Mary almost every day, crying at the Holy Sepulchre. One afternoon, as I sit reading on a nearby bench, she stands up, dries her eyes, and walks down the stairs, out of Calvary, into the twentieth century. This is what I've been waiting for. I am deeply curious about Mary's real identity. I know only that she speaks Polish and some English, and that she has been in Jerusalem for at least three years. She is quite well known in the Old City. She and the others who may be unrecovered exemplars of the Jerusalem Syndrome (a rambling, stumbling Satan, King David at the Western Wall, and a whole host of wandering messiahs) provide local color.

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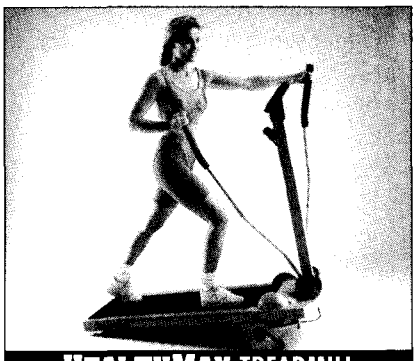

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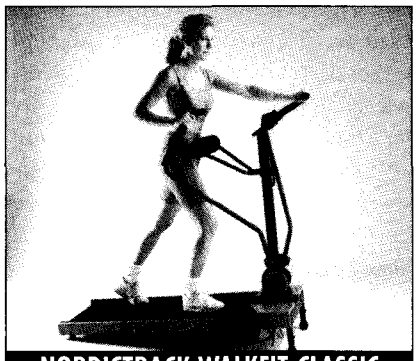

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I follow her out of the church and back down the path Christ took toward his crucifixion—the Via Dolorosa, or Sorrowful Way. At the place where Jesus is said to have stumbled, Mary—as always—makes a sad, tiny tripping movement. A couple of feet past, a boy expertly casts a long cascade of postcards in front of her, trying to sell them for a shekel. Mary turns left, into the Jerusalem Star Restaurant, where she orders a falafel while I hover nearby. I want to ask her, among other things, to describe the moment when she discovered her own divinity, the moment her identity flowered.

When I gesture toward the chair across from her, lifting my eyebrows, Mary looks back with gentle indifference. I sit down. "You are Mary?" I say. I am very close to her. Her eyes are brown, her face broad, her hair cropped short. She says nothing. I tell her who I am, where I'm from. She nods, and smiles a bit vaguely. But when I say, "You are from Poland?" she shakes her head no. "You have family?" I ask. "Children? I mean, besides . . . " She becomes annoyed with me, and keeps shaking her head no. She no longer wants me to talk to her. She seems threatened, even as I apologize. Finally I flee, and spiraling back up the Dolorosa, past the Chapel of the Flagellation, I feel guilty, as if by touching her identity I have touched an open wound. I also feel a twinge of nervousness, as if I had been banished by the Virgin herself.

YAIR Bar El, who presides over Kfar Shaul, is a gentle, serene man originally from Buenos Aires. His office is high above the sultry campus of the hospital; it feels a bit like a tree house.

Since Bar El named the syndrome, in 1982, he has treated hundreds of messiahs and prophets and Virgin Marys. The managers of Christian hostels are by now well acquainted with the Jerusalem Syndrome, Bar El tells me. They know how to spot it and where to send its sufferers. The symptoms are readily observed. "The first symptom is falling behind the tour," Bar El says. "The second is irritation with one's traveling companions." After that comes preaching or excessive singing, and then the clincher—undressing and wrapping oneself in bed sheets.

Bar El speaks of his patients with mild amusement and respect. Like Witztum, he tells me that the Jerusalem Syndrome is not a true psychosis. He regards those with the syndrome proper not as insane in an ordinary sense but as religious casualties—people who got too close to the fire, and caught fire themselves.

As for treatment, Bar El's methods are varied; he operates case by case, individual by individual, as seems necessary given the variety of the patients he treats: a woman pregnant again and again with God's child but unable to give birth until the entire world reforms; a Canadian Samson who weeps because nobody will believe him; a Jesus who calls the Israeli police to report unbelievers. Sometimes Bar El brings in family members to remind the patient of the real identity for which he or she is responsible. Sometimes he uses mild antipsychotic drugs. Though he doesn't think that group therapy is a successful treatment for the syndrome, he once put two messiahs in a room and asked them to decide who was the true Messiah; after an hour and a half each claimed that the other was the impostor.

"The most important thing, finally," Bar El says, as he walks me out of his office, "is to get them away from the stimulus. Once away from the city, they are usually fine." I walk down the stairs and stand alone for a while in the shade of a pomegranate tree, staring out over the magnificent city—the stimulus—scattered over the Judean hills, its spires and domes rising and falling. It is so beautiful that for a moment I can imagine descending into it, abandoning my identity and taking on a more religious one, if only to belong inextricably to the city and its history, as a vein belongs to the body. The sun is setting, casting a pink light over the Arab side of town, the doors of which are closed today in a mourning strike for two Arabs killed in a skirmish at a Gaza checkpoint.

A small man with a beard joins me under the tree. I met him earlier in the day. He is a patient at Kfar Shaul. He said he was formerly a child psychologist at Yale University. Bar El could not introduce me to any of the messiahs, because of client privilege, so I ask the patient, "Do you know anybody who has the Jerusalem Syndrome?"

"What's that?" he says.

"When the identity of the land overwhelms the identity of the individual."

"Oh, that," he says. "Everybody in Jerusalem has that."

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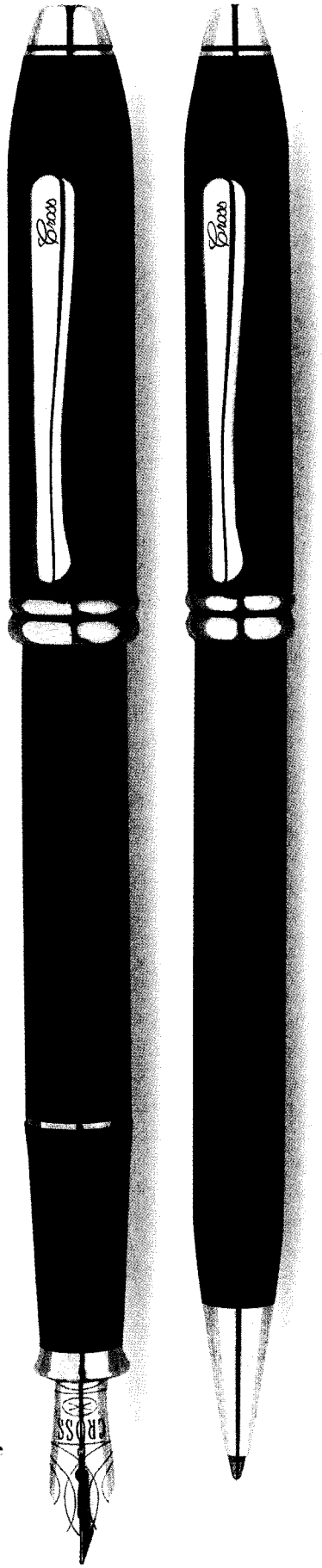

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I linger at Kfar Shaul until after dinner, when the patients get their medicine. A male nurse allows me to sit and watch as they come in, one by one, out of the gloaming into this small, bright room. He gives out different pills in tiny paper cups. He offers me some Prozac, laughing. Some of the patients who shuffle in are obviously disturbed, yet some seem to me perfectly content. One man's yarmulke falls off when he tips his head back to swallow his pills. He winks at the nurse as he picks it up. Most of the patients at Kfar Shaul speak English. Three or four of them speak private languages all their own.

As for the messiahs, I can't spot them, and nobody is allowed to tell me who they are. I am told, though, that they are often given haloperidol or other antipsychotic drugs. Perhaps if America's most famous victim of the syndrome, David Koresh, who recognized his own divinity on a visit to Jerusalem in the summer of 1983 but was not treated at Kfar Shaul, had been given haloperidol, the Waco massacre would never have happened. Haloperidol, pharmacologists explain, is a dopamine antagonist; some psychiatrists hypothesize that too much dopamine can cause the mind to be overactive and project to excess, to translate what *is* into what *might be*—an action of faith. An overabundance of dopamine, then, may blur the differences one perceives between oneself and God. Haloperidol blocks some of the dopamine receptors, closes the gates, prevents interplay in the mind between what is seen and what is unseen, discourages the leap of faith. Physicians keep the dosage very low, however, fearing that too much of the drug might wipe out the religious imagination entirely.

"The most important thing," Bar El says, "is to get them away from the stimulus. Once away from the city, they are usually fine."

IF you take a sharp left upon entering the Holy Sepulchre, you come to the small domed entrance to the Chapel of the Angel. This little room leads into another, tinier room with a hundred candles blazing, the Tomb of Jesus. Surrounding the entrance to the tomb are little marble faces. The ones that are high up, beyond reach, look down with all sorts of expressions—pain, anxiety, agony, irony—but the ones within reach are completely, eerily blank. Perhaps the Catholics have done this. They rub the faces with their fingers, or kiss them as they pass.

One might presume, walking through the Holy Sepulchre, that believers who exhibit the most ritualized behavior are at greatest risk for the syndrome; among Christians, therefore, members of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches would contract it most often. But in fact 95 percent of all patients who are treated for the syndrome proper are Protestants. Yair Bar El told *The Jerusalem Post*, "For Protestants, the religious hierarchy has been broken. They have a direct connection to God, which enables them to go through a strong personal emotional experience."

In his recent and somewhat controversial book *Religious Melancholy and Protestant Experience in America*, Julius H. Rubin postulates the existence of "a distinctive psychopathology characteristic of evangelical Protestants" stretching back to Martin Luther and the loss of ritualistic sacraments, such as confession. Devout Catholics and devout Jews may therefore be psychologically healthier than devout Protestants, because rituals are like psychic machinery by which the believer gets close to God, to the fire, without succumbing to the flames.

Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse, an Episcopalian priest and a practicing psychiatrist who serves on the American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Religion and Psychiatry, concurs with this viewpoint. "The Protestant stands alone before God. This is the strength and the weakness of Protestantism. Obviously, it's an advantage to stand face to face with God. But as you can see, it can have serious psychological drawbacks."

I SEE Mary one last time. By now I have joined that wandering American sect with the droning leader: the tour. Tours are of course humiliating, because they mark the traveler as a tourist, somebody passing over the surface of the city, rather than a pilgrim, who knows the city in her heart. This particular tour is doubly humiliating, because we are all given matching hats to wear that say HOLY ROCK CAFE JERUSALEM.

En masse we curl around and around the narrow streets of the Old City, until, in the late afternoon, we reach the Holy Sepulchre and enter into its cool, dense religious confusion. As we walk through the dim sanctuaries, we keep passing between worshippers and the objects of their worship—stones, crosses, gold-drenched altars. Finally we ascend the cracked marble steps to Calvary, two by two.

And there is Mary, carrying on as usual, as if she'd only just heard the news. Behind Mary is a huge mosaic depicting Jesus' death. Our guide is pointing out the blood falling from Jesus' wounds, like a trail of sparkling rubies, but everybody's attention is riveted on Mary. Her grief is palpable; it fills the room.

After watching and thinking about Mary for a month, I have developed a feeling for her project. A formidable history lies behind her actions—through the ages whole sects and religious orders have been dedicated to keeping Mary's grief alive. They have believed that to stop mourning the death of Jesus Christ is to cleave the human being from God permanently, since Jesus lies as the bridge across the great abyss. If at any moment no one is shedding tears over the Crucifixion, then human nature will be irretrievably cut loose from the love of God.

When Mary moves from one station to another, a few feet away, she stops crying instantly. We can see then how precise she is about this; it is her job. She glances up at our tour. I beam back, hoping she might recognize me, maybe even raise a hand. I feel a thrill at the thought—to be plucked out of this ordinary crowd from America, to be distinguished from the tourists as somebody connected, not apart, somebody woven into the intricate fabric of this endless city, a city made in the image of heaven just as surely as human beings are made in the fragmented image and substance of God.

But her gaze passes over me easily, without recognition. She walks to the silver altar of Calvary very calmly, and then falls to the floor suddenly, incautiously, in what appears to be a last-ditch effort to save us all.

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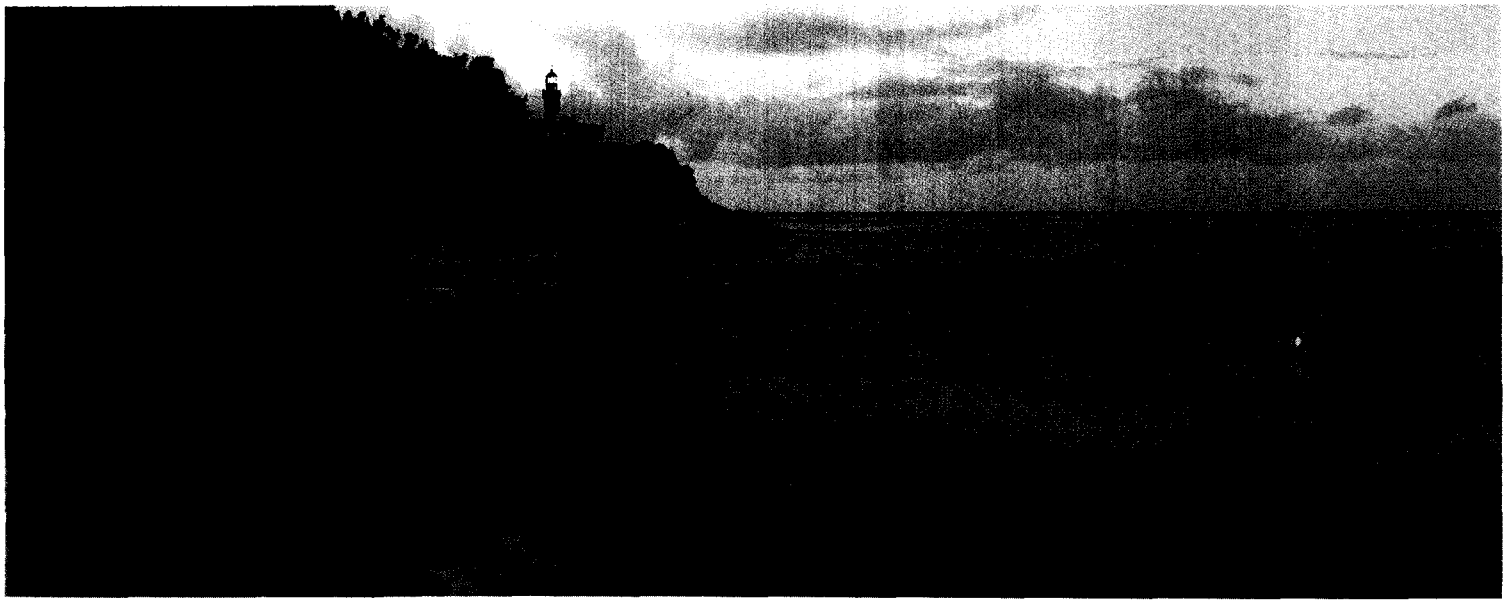

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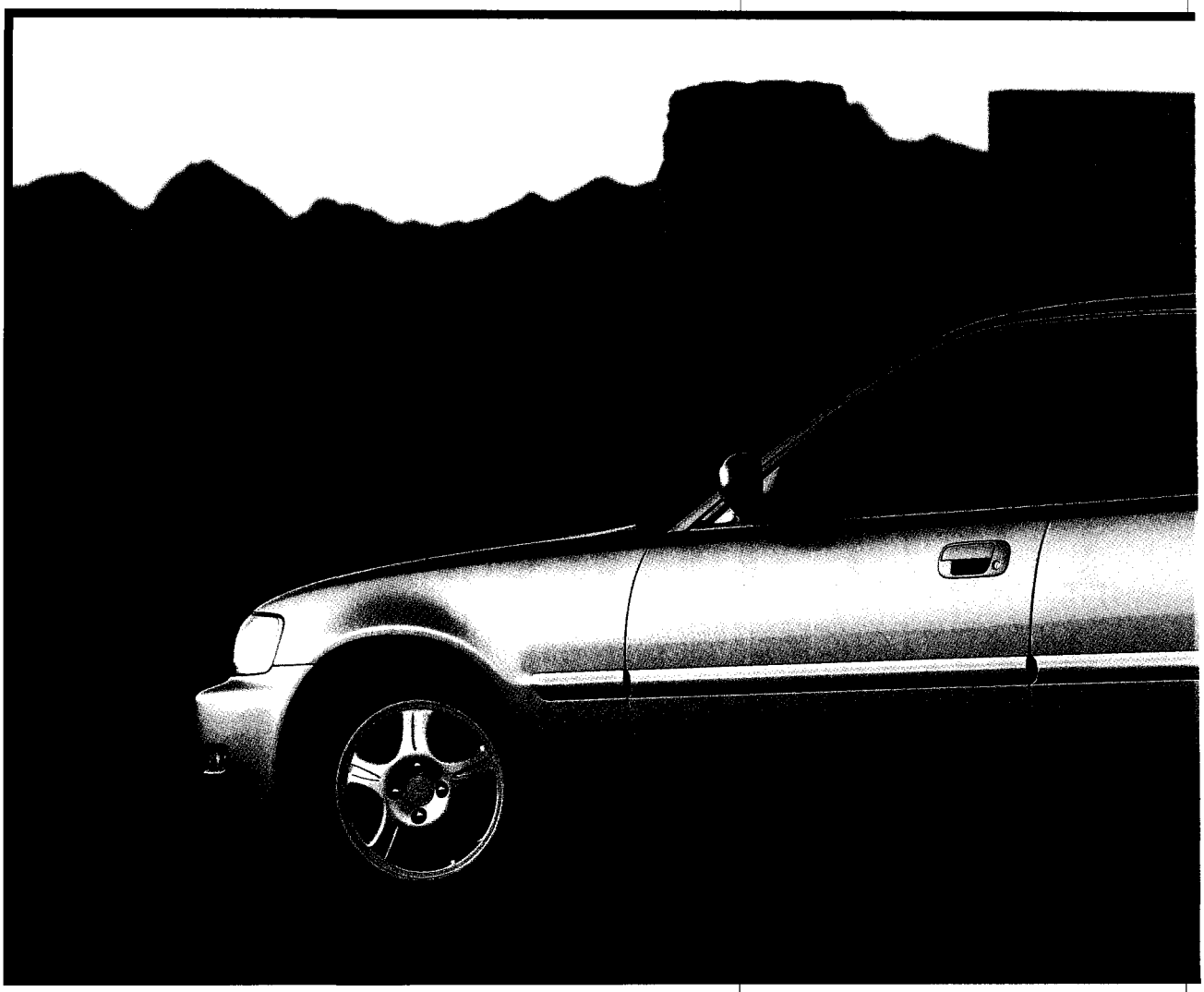

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Cowboyography

How the songwriter and singer Ian Tyson has remade cowboy music

by Jane and Michael Stern

IAN Tyson came to Elko, Nevada, from his ranch in western Canada last January to sing his cowboy songs and help other cowboys sing theirs. Elko, between the Great Salt Lake Desert and the Shoshone Range, is a wagon-train stop to which buckaroos have ridden for more than a century: a place to shake off trail dust, whoop it up, and lament headstrong horses and women. Tyson, who first made his name in the 1960s, as half of the popular folk-singing duo Ian and Sylvia, flew down to be part of this year's annual Cowboy Poetry Gathering. Elko is cold in January, but the gathering takes place in the dead of winter for a good reason: it is the only time some poets can leave their cattle. The fall roundups are over, and spring calving season has not yet begun.

The doings in Elko are a bonanza for men and women from all over the West who yearn to say something about their lives. The Western Folklife Center, based in Elko, sponsors the gathering, which includes seminars and workshops with titles like "Cowboy Code," "In Praise of the Horse," "History: When Indians Became Cowboys," "Ranch Remedies," and "Swapping Stories," along with sessions (called "Take Your Turn") at which anyone is welcome to express whatever is in his or her heart. Spontaneous recitations take place all over town. There may yet exist some taciturn wranglers of the Gary Cooper type, but not one of them comes to Elko. For the duration of the gathering, moments of silence scarcely exist among these prolix plainsmen, many of whom spend much of the year alone with an audience of cows. Instead of pistols they pack Sonys in belt holsters, so that they can record flashes of their own inspiration or good words said by others.

At 6:00 A.M. in the coffee shop of the Stockmen's Motor Hotel, as we slice into gravy-smothered chicken-fried steaks, two lanky cowpunchers stroll past looking for a booth, talking in rhyme. In the rifle store downtown one shopper checks the iron sights of a lever-action 30-06 Winchester while his buddy recites a sonnet he wrote about a desperado stranded in the hills and running out of ammunition. From the boisterous communal tables of the Basque dinner halls on Silver Street to casual gatherings in motel rooms all over town, cowboys declaim their poems, sing their songs, and spin their yarns.

Ian Tyson is scheduled to star in a concert Wednesday night, and before that, on Tuesday and Wednesday mornings, he will lead a workshop in songwriting. The Folklife Center limited enrollment to thirty people, and the class is full. In this crowd Ian Tyson is a living god at the summit of his creative power. To write a song with him in 1995 is like what it might have been to riff with Charlie Parker in 1950 or Elvis in 1956 or Bob Dylan in 1965.

Illustrations by Joo Chung

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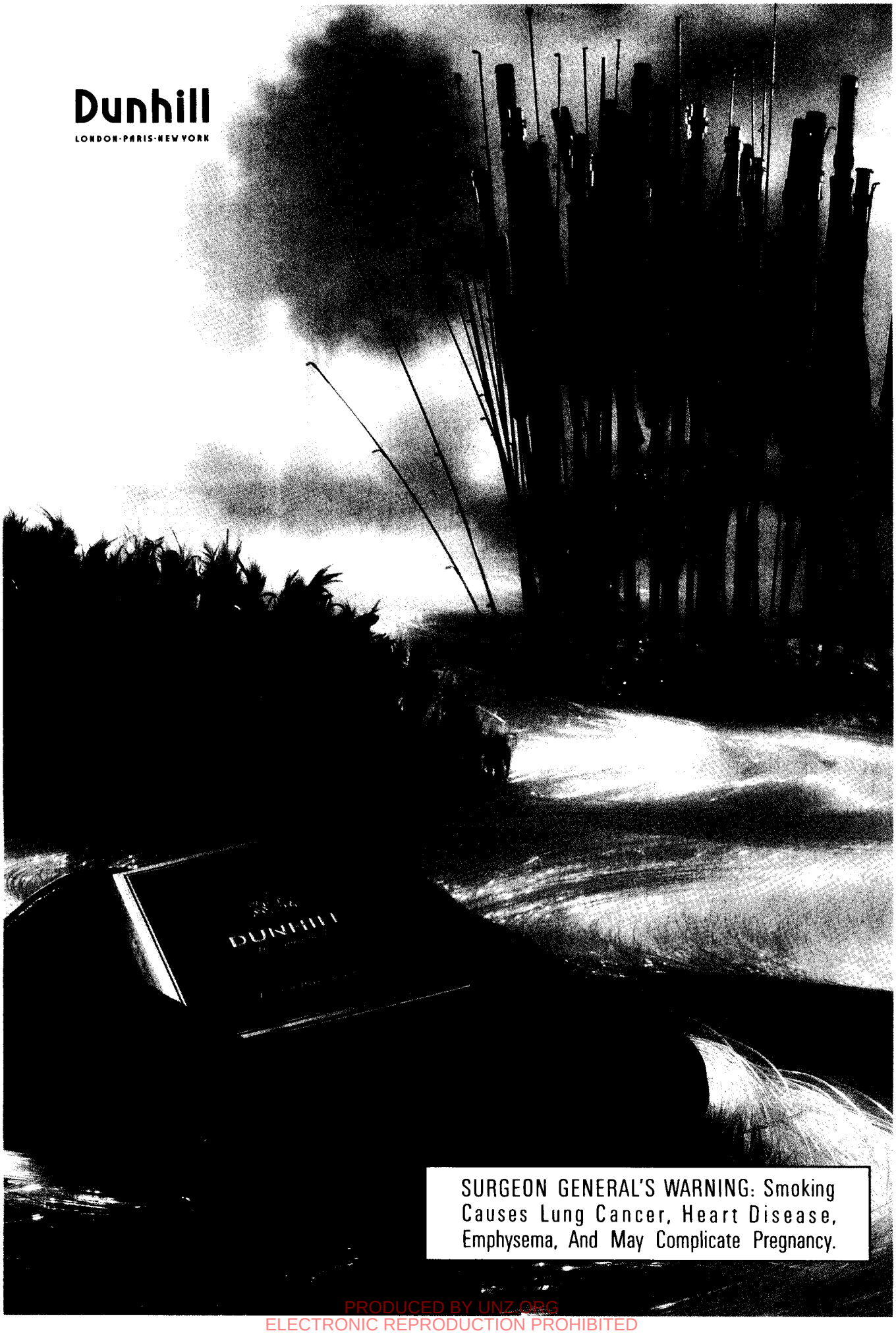

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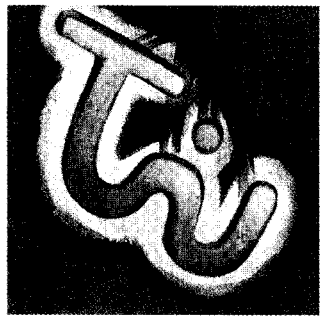
Tyson remade the rules of cowboy music—absorbed everything that went before him and then created something that contains the past but sounds wholly new. Almost single-handedly he revived interest in a song form that had been dormant, if not dead, for at least three decades. His 1986 album, *Cowboyography*, was the watershed. It includes original songs about lost love and lyrical landscapes in the West, and about cowboy idols from the turn-of-the-century western artist Charles M. Russell to the fugitive survivalist Claude Dallas, who became a folk hero in the early 1980s after shooting two Idaho game wardens. Tyson often jokes that he recorded the album "for the seven hundred working cowboys in North America." It has sold more than 100,000 copies—not a monster hit by Madonna's standards, but big enough to start cultural observers thinking about a "cowboy renaissance."

Fresh as Ian Tyson's music sounds, in one way he is doing now just what he did in the 1960s: giving new life to a vintage form of musical expression. Thirty years ago many of the tunes he and Sylvia Fricker sang were ancient Scotch-Irish ballads, such as "Nova Scotia Farewell" and "Come All Ye Fair and Tender Ladies." Today his repertoire contains his own rearrangements of many of the classic cowboy songs, such as "Whoopee Ti-Yi-Yo," "Leavin' Cheyenne," and "Colorado Trail."

For him it has been a logical progression. The old songs of America's cattle country, Tyson points out, were based on traditional Scotch-Irish ballads; with an infusion of frontier wit, Mexican vaquero lingo, and the rhythms of freed black slaves who joined the cattle drives north, the Old World strains became cowboy folk songs. Writing in his recently published autobiography, *I Never Sold My Saddle*, about the kind of music heard at the Cowboy Poetry Gathering, Tyson observed, "Elko is more folk music than anything I ever did when I was a folkie. It's real folk music."

THE development of Ian Tyson's new identity as a leading voice of cowboy culture (as opposed to his earlier one as a folkie) coincides with the evolution of the Elko Cowboy Poetry Gathering. "I am a product of Elko in terms of my American following," Tyson wrote. People at the gathering were eager to hear his songs about the West, for he is an artist who seems truly to be one of their own kind. Indeed, writing cowboy music comes naturally to Tyson. Born and raised in the Canadian West, he grew up with horses, and like many youngsters who read books by the seminal western mythmaker Will James (himself originally a Canadian), he dreamed of riding the wild and windy slopes that James described so seductively. He recalls that even in the hootenanny days of the 1960s it was Sylvia who wanted to sing "Captain Woodstock's Courtship"; he preferred "Texas Rangers." When the popularity of folk music waned, Tyson used his songwriting royalties to buy a ranch in Alberta. By 1980 he was performing what he calls "drinking music" at a bar in Calgary called the Ranchman's, but he was more interested in the cattle and the cutting horses he raised at the T-Bar-Y than in writing songs and making records.



Then a wondrous thing happened. As Tyson describes it, a new kind of music simply began to flow from life on the ranch, and he started to write about good horses and cowboy ways, about Will James and the Goodnight-Loving Trail, about the beauty of the northern lights or a hawk on the wing. "It's like it was preordained," he wrote in his autobiography, "like I was selected by something, somebody to do this."

Tyson found himself in a state that creative artists seek all their lives: doing work that felt exactly right. Of his first cowboy album, *Old Corrals and Sagebrush*, which was released in 1983, he observed, "It seemed like it was recording us toward the end, rather than us recording it." By the time he performed at the first Cowboy Poetry Gathering, in 1985, he was a musician with a mythic vision, a distinctive voice, and a repertoire that described the West in ways no one had heard before. In the ensuing years the gathering has mushroomed from a few hundred loquacious cowpokes to 10,000 people, and Tyson has recorded four more albums of western-theme songs, earning Canadian Country Music Association awards for best album (*Cowboyography*) and best single ("Navajo Rug," written with Tom Russell).

Tyson has done more than put new life in sounds from the frontier's past. He has been a compelling writer since the start of his career (his best-known early compositions are "Someday Soon," which gave Judy Collins a major hit in 1969, and "Four Strong Winds"), and his output of original songs about life in wide-open spaces is prodigious. Some of his lyrics retell familiar cow-country fables: "Murder Steer" is about a yearling bull branded with the word MURDER after a Texan was shot dead trying to claim it, and "Casey Tibbs" is about the greatest rodeo bronc rider ever. Many Tyson compositions are wistful elegies, such as "M.C. Horses," about the auctioning and dispersal of a once-great remuda of ranch horses, and "Jaquima to Freno" (written with Blaine McIntyre), about the passing of the old vaquero skills. He has written mournful ballads about men who choose the cowboy life and then look back with a troubled mixture of joy and regret on what that choice has meant. The chorus of "I Outgrew the Wagon," which he wrote with Ross Knox, bemoans the hardships of the range, but the last verse says, "Don't misunderstand me / There were lots of good times too / I would not trade a single memory /...Yeah we was wild as the broncs we rode / And the days stretched endlessly." And he has written songs that are as exhilarating as a fast gallop on a high plateau, among them "Horsethief Moon," a whirling Mexican polka about the love of a cowboy for a cowgirl whose "braids are like bronc reins, they shine in the sun."

Despite Tyson's success, cowboy culture is still very much a subculture, and his popularity has been limited in the United States by the fact that his music gets so little airplay. Instead of clever pop lyrics, as in the country-western hit "Too Much Week at the End of the Money," Tyson leans toward what he has called "knife and whore songs" and western gothics. His melodies are often written in the very nonpop (but classically western) musical styles of the waltz, the shuffle,

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and the polka. Nor does Tyson fit the mold of platinum-record Nashville "hat acts" like Garth Brooks and Dwight Yoakam, who wear showy cowboy duds and put on concerts as gaudy as any rock star's. His fans are all eager to point out that Mr. Tyson is *not* country-western. He is unhyphenated western, without a jot of rhinestone frills about him. He is, after all, a working rancher. His business cards, which he keeps tucked inside the sweatband of his cowboy hat, list not only his address and phone and fax numbers but also the brand of his ranch, the name of his stud horse, and the names of his stud's sire and dam. The cowboy singer Mike Beck tells of the time Tyson asked him to come along on a concert tour. Beck imagined traveling in a deluxe musician's tour bus; instead they pulled a stock trailer so that Tyson could pick up some horses and cattle along the way.

IAN Tyson's songwriting workshop takes place in a big meeting room at the Elks Club, on Idaho Street. Among the thirty participants are three women, one storytelling Crow Indian cowboy, and a lumberjack from Alaska who wants to write songs about his love for wood. Most have brought a guitar or a harmonica. Only a few of the men do not wear tall-crowned hats and high-heeled boots; many sport wide waxed moustaches and rodeo-trophy buckles on their belts. Even those who do not tend cows for a living adhere to the cowboy's code of courtly ways and trail manners: they open doors for ladies and stand up to shake hands when they meet men; any time you encounter one, indoors or out, he will tip his Stetson, look you square in the eye, and offer a cordial salutation.

When Tyson walks into the room at nine o'clock, carrying his guitar and a briefcase, a wide-brimmed black hat thrown back on his head, conversation stops. This is politeness; it is also awe. And it is his charisma. At age sixty-one, Tyson is head-turning handsome in a purely cowboy way: tall and lean, with a rugged face etched by wind and sun and a fair amount of whiskey. There is an easy-going smile in his eyes, but as he pans the room, his gaze is rock steady: it is a look that calms a skittish horse and lets people know he's in charge. His hands are tough and strong, but he uses them meticulously—they are a horseman's hands. His

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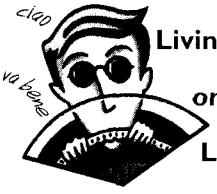

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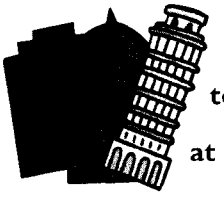

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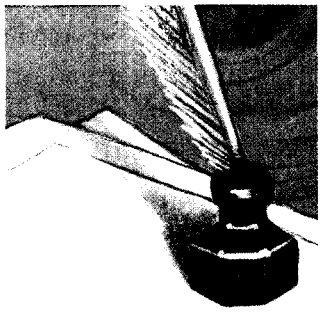
voice is remarkable: deep, relaxed, and comforting, with a sorrowful bass resonance that is as smooth and sweet as clover honey.

"I cannot teach you how to write a song," Tyson begins. "I am sorry, but it cannot be done. What I can do is help you with the mechanics, the pure craft of it. I've been doing that for thirty years, and I've been able to afford to ranch cows because of it." He strums his guitar to demonstrate what he calls "the absolute fundamental no matter what you are doing"—the metronomic four-four time signature of so much popular rock-and-roll and country music today. "If you want to be a songwriter and sell your songs, you have to learn it," he says. "I practice four-four an hour a day in my cabin, and nothing is going to slow me down or speed me up. You absolutely need four-four. Imagine if I had written 'Someday Soon' as a shuffle." He changes rhythm and plays it as a polka. "'Get out of here! You're fired!'" He tries it in three-four time, as a waltz. "Sounds kind of dumb, doesn't it?" But then he strums "Faded Love," the classic Bob Wills Texas shuffle, the way it was written, with a pronounced backbeat. It sounds just right. "This is the soul of old country music," he says, riding Wills's lilting rhythm as if it were an easy-loping cow pony. He then switches "Faded Love" to a more symmetrical four-four time and surprises himself. "Not bad, not bad," he says, listening to his guitar. "But not authentic."

As he strums and hums his own and others' compositions to make his points about time-signature technique, many participants in the workshop seem to forget that they are here to work and learn. It is mesmerizing to listen to him go from the wavy one-two-three, one-two-three of "Tennessee Waltz" to the driving straight-eight surge of Chuck Berry's "Promised Land" to the eerie strains he wrote (with Tom Russell) in a minor key to tell the legend of the outlaw Claude Dallas.



Tyson's advice is practical. "If you are going to write a gunfighter song or a murder ballad, you go into the minor keys," he says, and then he sings the opening chorus of "Claude Dallas" a cappella:

In a land the Spanish once had called
the Northern Mystery
Where rivers run and disappear
And the Mustang still lives free
By the Devil's wash and the coyote
hole
In the wild Owyee Range
Somewhere in the sage tonight
The wind calls out his name
Aye Aye Aye

"That song is in a minor scale," he says, "but you need to kick the sucker, so you go up into the majors to lift the mood. When you want to shoot someone, you go back into the minors. It's good to keep a song at a high trot and then break it into a lope from time to time. That raises it up, and it soars."

Although some people came to the workshop with their own compositions in hopes of getting them critiqued, Tyson has other plans. "I'm going to have you collaborate," he says. "I love collaborating. If you've got a good, stimulating partner, you can write a song in a day. That's fun. It's a lot more fun than my old way of torturing myself up in the hills doing a slow waltz in a minor key until you want to commit suicide." He says he won't restrict the rhythm but wants everyone to stick to the same theme. He asks for suggestions.

"What about a song about the prairie creating a song?" suggests Tom Zachry, forty-nine, who hails from the small town of Dayton, Nevada, near Carson City, where he is a "schoolmarm"—his word—who teaches third grade. His guitar case is emblazoned with a bumper sticker that says TRUST EVERYBODY BUT BRAND YOUR CALVES, and his briefcase has one that says I'M THE N.R.A.

"Good idea," Tyson says to Zachry. "Very Bob Nolan [author of 'Tumbling Tumbleweeds']. It's a good theme—been around since western music has been around. It's about the love of the land, isn't it? But you'll have to stretch it out to get thirty-two bars."

Stephan Blanchard, thirty-five, born in the South Bronx but now a citizen of Oregon, and outfitted all in denim with a battered slouch hat, a red silk neckerchief, and pointy red cowboy boots, suggests "voices of the sage"—about a cowboy listening to the prairie and trying to choose between a woman and cowboying.

"Good," Tyson says. "I'll put you and Tom together."

Finally a theme for the whole room is chosen—the changing West of the 1990s—and the class is divided into five groups. "Work on this. Really try hard," Tyson tells everyone before each group finds its own place to write. "I want to see your entrails on the table tomorrow morning."

As reporters with no musical ability, we had planned merely to observe the goings-on, but Tyson will have none of that. He puts us with Tom Zachry, Stephan Blanchard, and a forty-three-year-old trick-roping poet and veterinary anesthesiologist (large and small animals) from Hawaii named Gene Stowell. We five move to a big ballroom with elk heads mounted on the wall along with burnt-wood plaques that say FIDELITY, BROTHERHOOD, and JUSTICE, and an American flag under glass that once flew above the Capitol in Washington, D.C. We put some folding chairs in a circle, and just to get acquainted, each of the three musicians performs one of his own compositions. Zachry sings "Ranges and Changes," Blanchard sings "Just a Cowboy," and Stowell recites a poem of his that *Western Horseman* published last year, "If This Old Tack Could Talk." Each of the works has an elegiac mood and conveys the sense of loss that has been at the heart of western art since trail herders sang their requiem for old ways, "The Campfire Has Gone Out."

Guitars across their knees, the three aspiring songwriters begin to toss out lines and chords, and soon a verse about a cowboy at a lonely campfire starts to take shape. "This collaboration stuff is amazing," Zachry says, as Tyson strolls past and listens to the emerging song with an encouraging nod of approval. "God, we're good." Zachry laughs when the verse is infused with ghostly imagery and a woeful musical line is developed. "I'm starting to cry," he says. "If I can make myself cry, we must be doing just fine."

For two hours we write and rewrite, drifting into bull sessions to escape the

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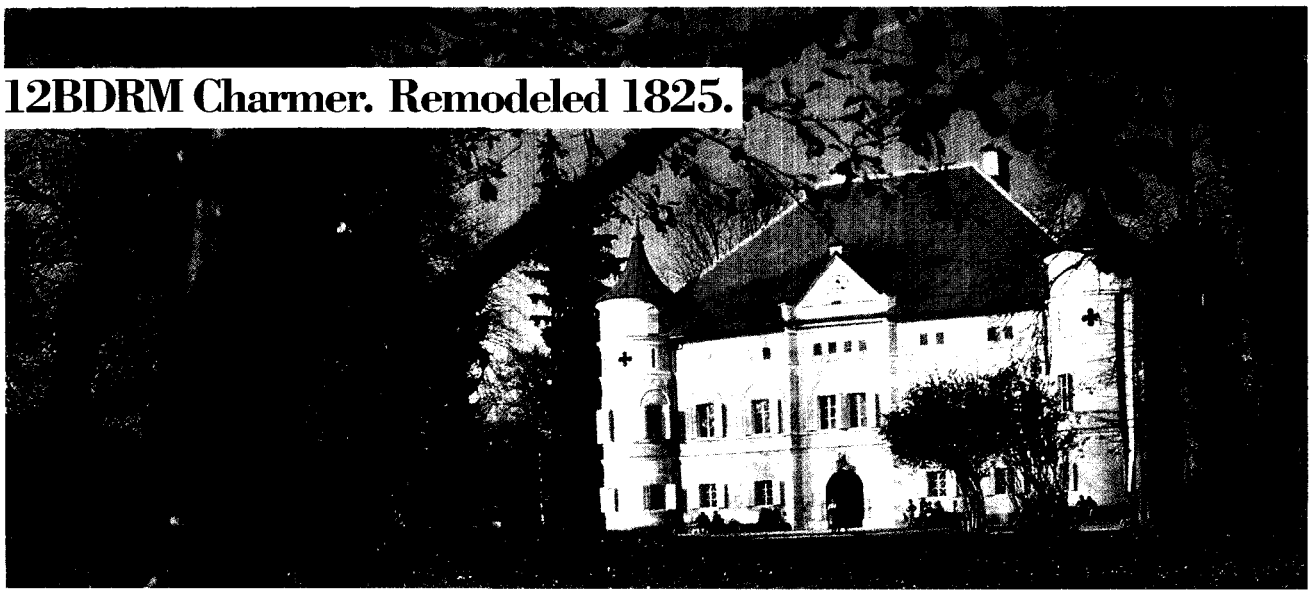
pressure of the creative process—swapping jokes and tall tales, reciting poems, strumming melodies, debating the virtues and vices of Appaloosa horses—and then charging back at the song. At one point the lyrics go off in a totally wrong direction and wind up at a dead end. Gene Stowell breaks the disheartened silence: "Let's just saddle another horse and get back to work." By midday we've got it: two verses and a chorus, in slow-waltz time. The next morning, when we meet at nine, Tom Zachry comes in with a third verse that he wrote overnight, saying he felt that the lyrics needed to be more specific. A title is chosen, fine-tuning is done, Zachry develops a melancholy part for his harmonica, and at 10:30 the song is ready to be performed.

"I AM not going to critique these songs," Tyson says before the groups present what they have written. "I am going to give you my impulse reaction, nothing intellectual, just the way I feel." His analysis is tough. "The chorus has exceptional changes and lifts the song immediately," he tells one group. "But your verses have a rather ordinary quality." About a song with lyrics that tell of the wolves to be released in Yellowstone Park, he cautions, "Yellowstone cannot be in a minor chord. It is a great national park. You just can't bum people out about it." He warns another group, "You have so many strong images, but the chorus doesn't change enough. It's too much like the verse melody. You've got to punch it, make that song take wing!" When he has trouble hearing a singer, he says, "Whatever you do, *enunciate*. If you Emmy Lou those choruses [referring to the way the singer Emmy Lou Harris sometimes swallows her words], all your good writing will be lost." After all five songs are sung, Tyson says, "We've got an album here!" He is being mighty generous, but we leave the workshop fantasizing about how we will divide up royalty checks.

That night Ian Tyson performs some of his own songs for an overflow crowd at the big modern auditorium in the Elko Convention Center. For the workshop students the performance is a humbling experience. By comparison with the songs we wrote, the majesty of his work is all the more stunning.

For those who love Tyson's music, there is something magical about his way with notes and words. After two days of teaching technique and time signatures, Tyson had concluded his workshop with a story about that magic and about some things that cannot be taught. He told how his album *Cowboyography* became his breakthrough, artistically as well as commercially, thanks not only to a producer who made all the right moves but also to a gift he received: he woke up one night in his cabin to the sound of a chinook (a warm spring wind), and the songs were simply *there*.

"Something was going on, something beyond my control," he said. "It was like the gods of music came down and said to me, 'It's yours.' It was a gift. I had the craft to get it all down. You need the craft to receive the inspiration. That is all you can do as a songwriter: find the gift and say what is in your heart. The world may not be interested. If it is, you are lucky. And if you can write one great song in your life, you are blessed."



Hardly a fixer-upper, this small castle sits just outside Klagenfurt on the Wörthersee, one of *Austria's Imperial Cities*. You can find it not far from the glimmering lake which adjoins the city, and encounter dozens of such royal hideaways as you travel from Klagenfurt on the Wörthersee across magnificent scenery to Vienna, Salzburg, Innsbruck, Graz or Linz. Each dating back centuries, some of these old fortresses and mansions now house museums, some offer visitor accommodations. Let Austrian Airlines take you there, with convenient connections from all major U.S. cities. To plan your travels along the Imperial way, get your free copy of the Imperial Cities magazine from the Austrian National Tourist Office, 1-800-474-9696.

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Celebrate Eldorado '95
June 3–4
Eldorado Canyon, Colorado

Held in conjunction with National Trails Day and supported by the American Mountain Foundation and the Colorado Mountain Club, this event allows climbers to help preserve and maintain the environment. On Saturday volunteers will clean up and repair trails in Eldorado Canyon State Park. The evening will feature an awards show and gear raffle, and on Sunday there will be a climbathon and trail run. For information call 303-494-3943.

Outdoor Adventure Expo
April 30
Freehold, New Jersey

An introduction to outdoor pursuits, this day-long expo in Freehold's Turkey Swamp Park offers families the chance to learn from experts who will be conducting lectures, demonstrations, and mini-clinics on wall climbing and mountain biking. Local and regional outdoor clubs will also be on hand to answer questions and give advice. For information call 908-842-4000.

MountainFilm 1995
May 26–29
Telluride, Colorado

This film festival, now in its seventeenth year, gives climbers the opportunity to meet with the giants of the sport, view high-adventure climbing and mountaineering films, and, of course, take advantage of Telluride's superb rock- and mountain-climbing areas. Joe Simpson, the author of the mountaineering classic *Touching the Void*, will appear as a special guest. The featured film this year will be *Fire on the Mountain*, a documentary about the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division and its exploits in Italy during the Second World War. The festival's events are scheduled to allow plenty of time for climbing. For more information call 303-728-4123.

Outdoor Sports Festival
July 22–24
Snowbird, Utah

Originating eight years ago as a sport-climbing invitational event, this festival has grown to include an open amateur event, seminars, mountain biking, canoeing, and kayaking—even a volleyball competition. The main event, however, is still climbing. Fourteen of the world's best climbers are invited to scale a 120-foot climbing wall built into the exterior of Snowbird's Cliff Lodge. The open amateur event is held on the same wall, and the top male and female climbers earn spots in the invitational. Located just outside Salt Lake City, in Little Cottonwood Canyon, Snowbird also boasts beautiful granite mountains to climb. For information call 801-742-2222.

Pocatello Pump
September 9–10
Pocatello, Idaho

The "pump" in the name of this event refers to the sensation athletes feel in their muscles after a particularly strenuous workout. Held in Ross Park, just north of Salt Lake City, the Pocatello Pump is a real endurance test for climbers, who must try to complete as many climbs as they can in an hour and a half. The contest is open to everyone, from beginners to experts, including children and recreational climbers. On Saturday night there will be a barbecue and dance (but since there's a competition on Sunday, you may find more wallflowers than dancers). For information call 208-236-3912.

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Ford is proud to sponsor *Ocean Planet*, currently at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C. Created to advance the understanding and conservation of the earth's oceans, the exhibition combines cutting-edge multi-media technology, sculpture, artifacts, specimens, models, educational resources, and an interactive online site on the World Wide Web. For more information call 202-357-4797.

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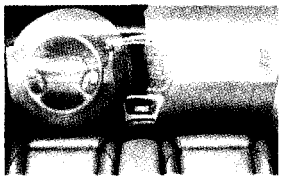

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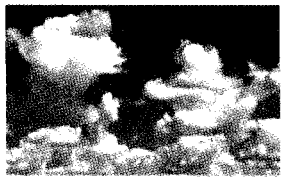

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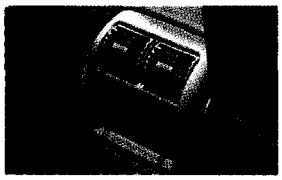
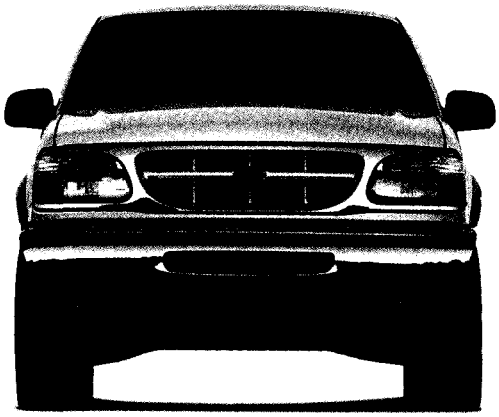


Unique new floor console has rear controls for radio, heating and air conditioning.



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Riviera, Relaxed

Corsica offers much of the Mediterranean's best, and little of its worst

by Corby Kummer

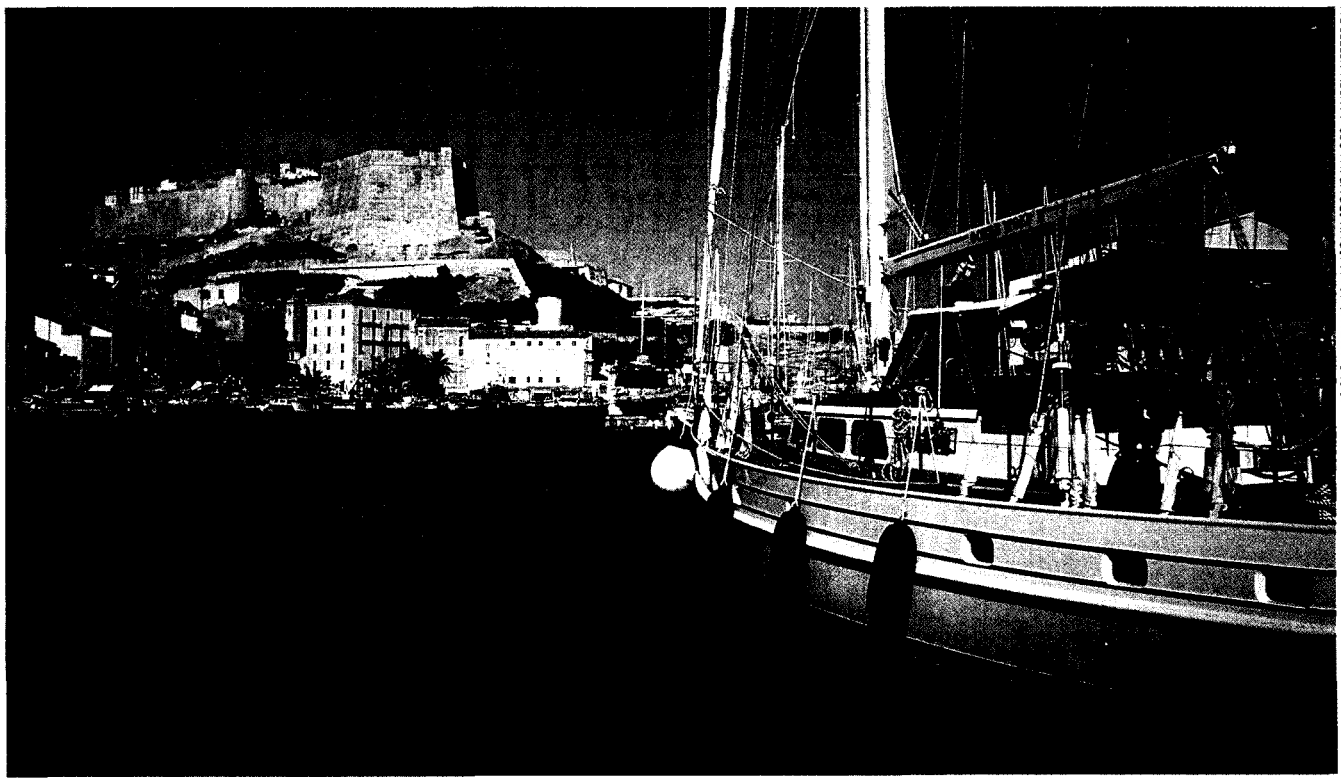
ITALIANS love to vacation on Sardinia. And where do Sardinians vacation? On Corsica, I learned recently, when friends from Sardinia invited me on holiday with them. These two big, rocky Mediterranean islands off the west coast of Italy had always been lumped together in my mind, so the choice of destination seemed odd at first. Most Americans would pick one or the other depending on whether they wanted to practice French in Corsica or Italian in Sardinia.

But Sardinians see it differently. Even if the sea around Sardinia is magnificent, they say, the beaches on Corsica are better served by hotels. Even if the barren, rugged mountains of Sardinia are an astonishing sight, the mountains of Corsica were not logged out in the past century, and the hikes and walks in the evergreen forests of Corsica's interior rival those of Switzerland. For anyone, it is rare to be able to drive in less than half an hour from a long sandy beach in the sun, near rocky Mediterranean fields covered with rosemary and lavender, to a pine-scented forest path still dusted with snow.

Too, Corsica is better equipped for tourism than Sardinia. Because over the centuries a stream of varying invaders ruled Sardinia, the natives came to distrust the sea and what it brought, and the coasts remained undeveloped; the single exception, the Costa Smeralda, was built up only in the past few decades. For centuries Corsica was dominated, with many tempestuous interruptions, by Genoese seafarers, who built fortified ports. Today these port towns have not only picturesque Genoese citadels and charming old districts to stroll through but also pleasant inns and cafés with stylish French touches. I found a number of those inns and restaurants to be memorably charming, and a few of the towns to have the easygoing atmosphere that Saint-Tropez is said to have had in the late fifties, with the gaily colored flags and pastel-colored stucco houses one sees in Raoul Dufy watercolors.

The extraordinary beauty of Corsica

Travelers still reach Bonifacio by sea, as they have done since ancient times



ABOVE: NATALIE FOBES/TONY STONE IMAGES; LAUREN HEFFERON

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should be enough to draw any visitor, especially since several big wild areas are close to comfortable places to stay. The reasonable prices for lodging (although not, unfortunately, for food) and the lack of crowds, except in July or August, should make any visitor want to return. Too, it's hard to get a fix on the place, which will draw a curious visitor back: the people are proud and wary, by turns voluble and aloof. It's not hard, though, to understand their fierce love for their native land.

LAUREN HEFFERON

Inland Corsica: flowers at every turn

I ARRIVED by ferry in the southern town of Bonifacio, one of many Corsican ports with a Genoese stone citadel perched on a craggy outcropping. This one is particularly dramatic, because the outcropping is not granite, as elsewhere on the island, but sheer white limestone. I came with the sirocco and left with the mistral. Corsica lives by its winds, giving names to many; when you walk the cobbled streets of the high citadels your constant companion is one of them, whistling at your back or insinuating itself in your path, as much a figure as any fortress or castle.

Bonifacio, like a surprising number of cities on Corsica, has an airport with frequent service to mainland France; you can often find government-subsidized bargain prices. Ferries arrive regularly from France and Italy at several Corsican ports. Jetfoil service from Nice will begin next month, cutting the travel time in half. You'll need to rent a good car to navigate the curving roads.

Although the island is smaller than Connecticut, its geography means that you can't see everything from one base. My friends wanted to show me every part of the island, and took me from Bonifacio straight up the east coast to Bastia, the island's principal port and largest city after the capital, Ajaccio. Apart from a long and airy square facing the water, it's dreary, but just above the city is Cap Corse, a large promontory covered with the prototypical Corsican flora: the *maquis*, a Mediterranean scrub of herbs and wildflowers—mostly myrtle, heath, juniper, laurel, and the evergreen bush cistus. The *maquis* blooms in some way nearly all year; from April through June it is magnificently fragrant and colored red and white and yellow and purple with fennel and geraniums, violets and orchids, mimosas and tiger lilies, cyclamen and broom. The word *maquis*, which was lent to Italian as *macchia*, is of Corsican origin, and came to have a patriotic meaning: guerrillas fighting the island's various occupiers were said to have "taken themselves to the *maquis*," and the name was revived for French Resistance fighters.

A short drive from Bastia is Saint-Florent, a small, lazy port dominated by a marina filled with glossy yachts and lined with restaurants and bars. It's a lovely place to lose an afternoon drinking pastis and watching the comings and goings of the apparently well-heeled sailors. Or you can drive a quarter hour into the hills to try the local muscat and white and red wines of Patrimonio, as both a town and the wine-producing region around it are called. There every few hundred feet a roadside cellar offers visitors samples of wine and *brocciu*, a mild and creamy sheep's-milk cheese, or homemade jams and marmalades. A bit farther into the interior are hill towns so reminiscent of those of Provence that the whole area seems like the Riviera, relaxed.

THE real Corsica is inland. Guidebooks warn that the city of Corte, at almost the exact center of the island, is unwelcoming, perhaps because of the constant car and truck traffic up and down the main drag. But I was strongly drawn to Corte, the island's only university town, because I had a sense that I was seeing Corsica's heart. The city's desire to preserve and impart native culture made its people more open than the Corsicans I met elsewhere. Corte is a center of the island's strong separatist movement. Hostility against the French is active on Corsica, leading to terrorist attacks against French institutions and officials (these have so far not harmed tourists or affected Corte) and, especially in towns more frequented by tourists, to a kind of double French hauteur.

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The Bonaparte family lived for a time in Corte, and a brother of Napoleon's was baptized there, but the Corsicans don't much care to commemorate the family or its most famous member—Napoleon never did much for his native island or spoke very well of it, and the feeling is still returned. Instead Corsicans prefer to remember Pasquale Paoli, who in the mid-eighteenth century led successful rebellions against the Genoese, gave Corsica its first democratic constitution, and established the university at Corte, which he made the island's capital from 1755 to 1769. The city's main street is named for Paoli, as is a street or square in nearly every Corsican town; Place Gaffori, the center of Corte's old town, is named for another general who rebelled against the Genoese. The winding streets of the old town, with its Baroque churches and its shops selling local pottery and comestibles such as wild-boar sausage and various kinds of honey, have the quiet charm of the back streets of an eighteenth-century French city.

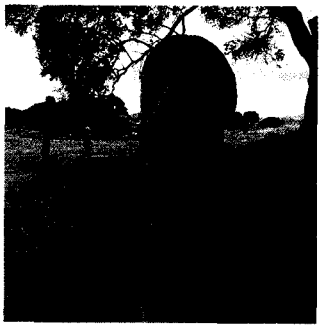
At a modestly luxurious inn a mile or so from the center of town my friends and I had our coziest dinner. The Auberge de la Restonica, named for the rushing mountain stream that all the rooms face (the noise lulls you to sleep), is in two parts: a modern hotel with twenty-eight comfortable rooms, and a converted old house, somewhat like a Swiss chalet, with eight rooms and also a good restaurant. After an aperitif by the stone fireplace we started with home-cured ham and the best version we found of one of the traditional dishes—thrush pâté, which was so good we ordered a second ramekin. The main course was river-caught trout sautéed à la meunière, accompanied by a light red Patrimonio. Not just the simplicity and quality of the meal but also the casual warmth of the family—the patriarch, Dominique Colonna, is a Corsican soccer hero of the sixties, and during dinner several generations of the family and their dogs wandered in and out—made this the most relaxed evening of a relaxed trip.

The hotel, in a chestnut and pine forest, would make a convenient base for excursions by car or on foot to the island's vast Parc Naturel Régional de la Corse, a national park that covers more than a third of Corsica. About an hour's drive south of Corte is the popular Forêt de Vizzavona, crisscrossed with well-marked hiking trails; out of earshot of a Corsican, I can say that it is as beautiful and salubrious as any Swiss forest. A narrow-gauge train runs twice a day from Corte to Vizzavona, stopping at every village on its way to Ajaccio; the train is popular with hikers, who report that it's a dramatic way to get to the next trailhead. The stucco and half-timbered little station in the forest, and the glorious views of the jagged snow-capped peak of the 7,900-foot Monte d'Oro, make the region seem like something out of *The Magic Mountain*. Indeed, the Grand Hotel du Monte d'Oro, in Vizzavona, was once a sanatorium.

More stunning still are the cliffs and gorges on the fifteen-mile drive along the river Asco, about an hour north of Corte and also part of the national park. At first the scenery is alpine, like that of Vizzavona, and around many curves of the road you can see Monte Cinto, at 8,900 feet the island's highest mountain. Past the steep, foreboding stone village of Asco the narrow road is flanked by spectacular grotesque *tafoni* formations of eroded orange-tinged stone. These look like fairy-tale figures of terror or something imagined by Maurice Sendak.

CALVI, a port at the top of the island's west coast, has the best of Corsica: a long and lovely beach; a busy but not diesel-fumed port lined with restaurants; an extensive citadel just big enough to wander in without getting lost, with mazelike streets and a lovely Baroque church at its heart; many good hotels; and even a pleasant modern town—and all a short drive from several entrances to the national park. In the summer yachts pull up and disgorge fashionable Continentals for their evening stroll.

Calvi lacks something the rest of the island does too: moderately priced and decent restaurants. In most places there is a choice



LAUREN HEFFERON

Menhirs dot Filitosa's landscape

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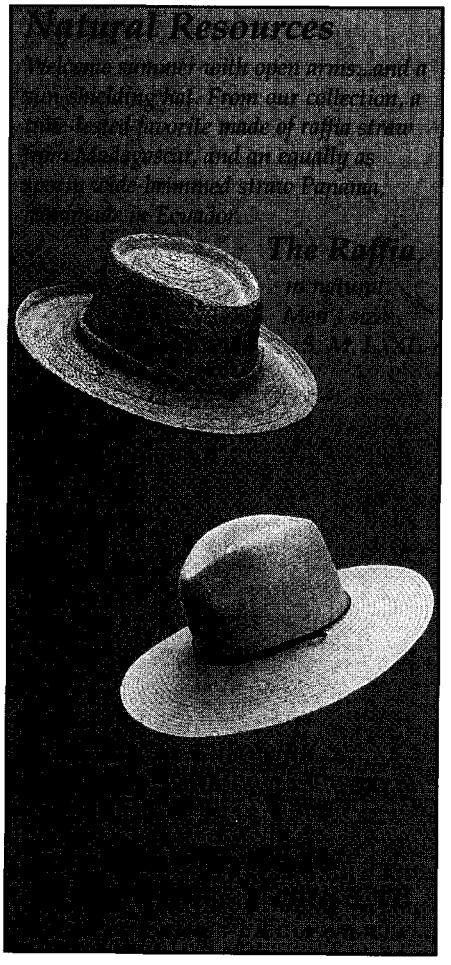

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LAUREN HEFFERON

Beyond many Corsican villages loom the mountains of the Parc Naturel Régional

of good and well-priced lodging (many luxury hotels cost $100–$200 a night, and half that during the low season), but restaurants charge very high prices for dull food—a typical example is $25 for a bowl of bouillabaisse or $30 for a fish main course.

True, I didn't try the garden restaurant of the Hotel Le Magnolia, a converted turn-of-the-century mansion in the middle of Calvi on a street with antique shops; the prices on the menu at least seemed warranted by the pretty dining room. I certainly enjoyed staying at the hotel. The rooms have themes—I stayed in the "Verlaine"—and Rococo-style decoration in colors like peach and sky-blue. They're a bit precious but pleasant, with big and well-equipped bathrooms. Rather than go to a restaurant, I furnished our group with a picnic from a market that happened to take place right next to the hotel that morning; farmers and bakers had come in from the hills with rustic pies made of wild greens and *brocciu*. For dessert I bought a big square of *fiadone*, a wonderful airy Corsican cheesecake scented with lemon and made with sheep's-milk ricotta.

Calvi has perhaps the widest choice of pleasant hotels of any Corsican city (the big Art Deco Grand Hotel in Calvi, closed when I visited, is said to be as appealing inside as out); most of the top-flight hotels, in fact, are along the west coast, the area most developed for tourists. Travelers in search of beaches should stay near Propriano, where there are long sandy littorals in view of mountains, although not in the town itself, which has been spoiled by tourism. The Miramar, a couple of miles away (on its own beach), is a luxury resort that my friends recommend highly.

A base in Bonifacio, on the southern tip of the island, gives access to the beaches around Propriano, an hour's drive away, and to Porto Vecchio, a half hour's drive, with its generous gulf that is popular with sailors and swimmers alike. Porto Vecchio has what my friends told me is Corsica's best restaurant, Lucullus (closed when we visited), and the Cala Rossa, another luxury hotel with a private beach, decorated with pastel-colored majolica and popular with cognoscenti. We stayed high in the citadel of Bonifacio in the very pretty Genovese hotel, newly and plushly outfitted.

On the roads and paths between Porto Vecchio and Propriano are menhirs, Neolithic stone figures that rise mysteriously from the landscape. The cult of stone, prevalent in Sardinia as well, is still unexplained—4,000 years ago the Torrean people carved the menhirs, but little is known of them—and its traces are evocative. The largest gatherings of Corsican figures are in Palaghju and Filitosa, near Propriano, but a surprise on many hikes is coming across an unmarked menhir, usually on its side. The best reference books for stories of menhirs and the evolving spirit of Corsica are the recent Rough Guide and Dorothy Carrington's definitive 1971 book, *Granite Island: A Portrait of Corsica.*

I'VE saved the best for last—something you might do too, if you leave Corsica from Ajaccio, which has the island's busiest airport. I found little to recommend in the city, apart from a good Titian at the recently renovated Musée Fesch, and the historical interest and bourgeois comfort of the Bonaparte house. But a few miles south, along the built-up coast, is Le Maquis, a smallish hotel of complete luxury, where every room is big and decorated in a different, mostly rustic, style, and where the restaurant is superb. In mid-season, until June 15 and after September 15, double rooms start at $300—and they're worth it, even if just for a night. It's the kind of hotel that's a world in itself (there's even an indoor pool)—one that makes you reluctant to return to the world you know.

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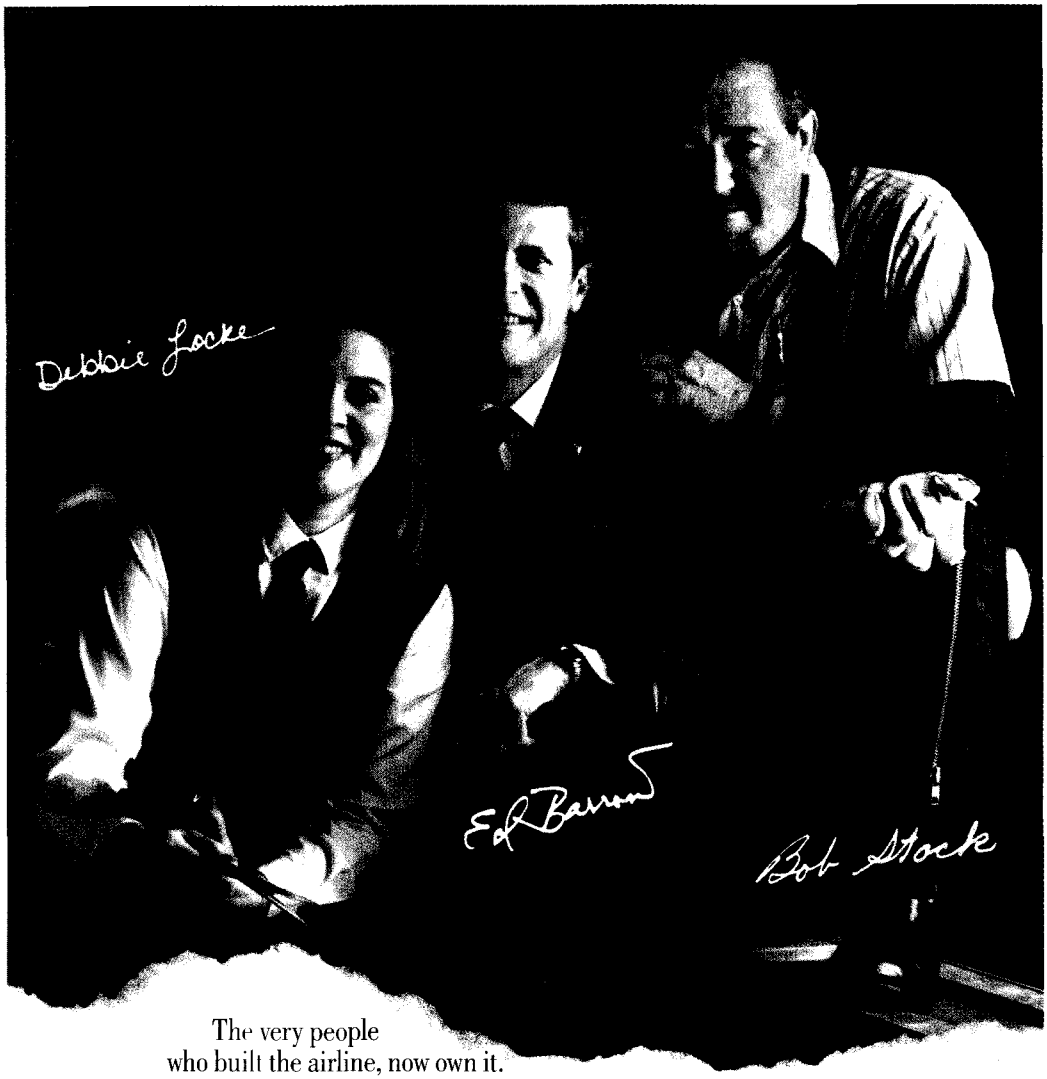

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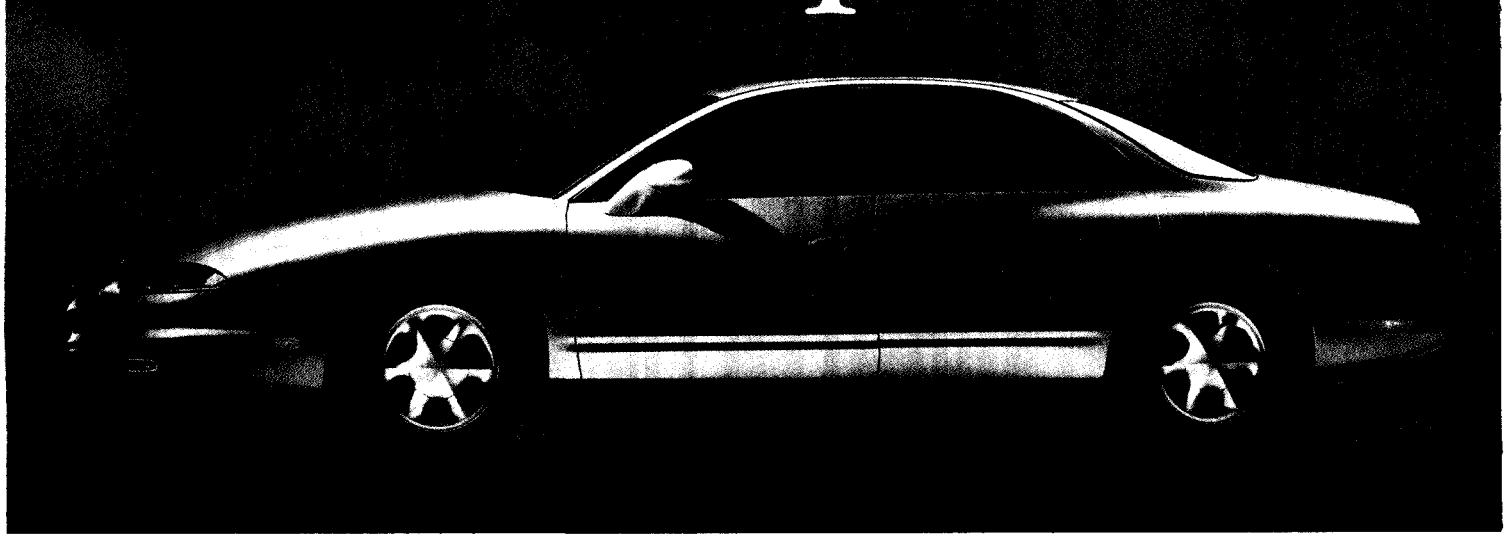

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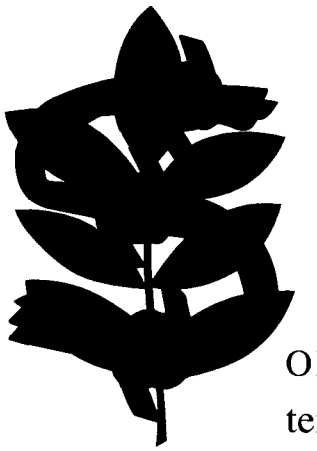
THE DIVERSITY MYTH: AMERICA'S LEADING EXPORT

by BENJAMIN SCHWARZ

The hortatory version of our history, in which America has long been a land of ethnic tolerance and multicultural harmony, leaves us with nothing useful to say to the failed states and riven polities of the post–Cold War world



OLIPSISM is a perennial American temptation. In a grotesquely comic muddle of causes and cultures, Lyndon Johnson once sought to buy off the North Vietnamese with promises of a Great Society–style project along the Mekong. Variants of the cry "Why can't they be more like us?" have long served as a staple of American tourists and foreign-policy mandarins alike. We have made ourselves at home in the world, characteristically, by regarding it as America in the making.

Illustrations by Douglas Fraser

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Thus imbued with ourselves, we often get the world wrong. Mussolini was not an impetuous New Dealer, nor Ho Chi Minh a Democratic pol. The West Bank is not the American South, nor is the cause of the Palestinian homeland an exotic version of the black struggle for civil rights. Similarly, the ethnic tumult loosed by the end of the Cold War is not to be assessed by pious invocations of our multi-ethnic, multiracial heritage of tolerance and civic comity. The bloodlettings in Bosnia, Rwanda, Chechnya, and Haiti have no parallel in the Parson Weems idea of our past which we trumpet abroad. Not that they are incommensurably worse than anything in the American experience. Rather, the history we hold up as a light to nations is a sanctimonious tissue of myth and self-infatuation. We get the world wrong because we get ourselves wrong. Taken without illusion, our history gives us no right to preach—but it should prepare us to understand the brutal realities of nation-building, at home and abroad.

The ideas of foreign-policy experts about finding reasonable solutions to internal conflicts are distorted by an idealized view of America's own history.

Over the past few years the American foreign-policy community has discovered that the world is riddled with ethnic, nationalist, and separatist conflicts ("ENS" wars, in Pentagon-speak). Characterizing the post–Cold War world as a simmering cauldron, experts in the State Department and on the National Security Council, in the foundations and the think tanks, point not only to Bosnia and Rwanda but also to the Baltic republics and Macedonia, to Moldova and Georgia, and assert that, as the former CIA director James Woolsey put it, the world is "more dangerous" now than during the Cold War. Sometimes it seems that such a pronouncement is uttered and met with as much relief as concern, for this new phenomenon supposedly means that expert advice, and Cold War bureaucracies, remain indispensable despite the end of the Cold War. Indeed, in proliferating conferences, workshops, and interagency working groups the national-security community is greeting ENS wars with the same entrepreneurial alarm with which it met the specter of Communist insurgency in the 1960s and "low-intensity conflict" in the 1980s. "The main strategic challenge for the United States," according to Leslie Gelb, the president of the Council on Foreign Relations, is to "develop plans . . . to stem civil wars."

The foreign-policy community's anxiety springs from convictions like those expressed by Warren Zimmermann, the former ambassador to Yugoslavia, when he declared that the war in Bosnia, for instance, has "baleful implications for . . . the United States," because what is at stake there is "the values of the melting pot." America's anxiety over the fragmentation of foreign states and societies arises from our sense that American society is fragmenting, culturally and ethnically. We are desperate to repair what the foreign-policy community terms "failed states" and "divided societies," for such success would prove to us that the liberal notions of pluralism and tolerance upon which we would like to believe that American unity was founded remain vital enough to build communities abroad and, perhaps more important, at home.

The problems with this approach start with a misunderstanding of history. The foreign-policy community usually describes ENS wars as products of the post–Cold War era. They are nothing of the sort. Bosnias have, of course, been occurring with grim regularity for millennia. These wars are also described as throwbacks to more intolerant and violent eras, and the assumption is made that if only the combatants could be placed on the path to modernity, the problem would be solved. It would be comforting to believe that such struggles are merely a relapse, a bloody detour on mankind's progressive road to tolerance and pluralism. But from 1945 to 1975, Harold Isaacs has reckoned in *Idols of the Tribe*

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WHAT MAKES A MOMENT

A MEMORY

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(1975), while the Cold War raged and the world reached unprecedented levels of prosperity, what are now called ENS conflicts killed some 10 million people: two million of them in India, another two million in Biafra's civil war, half a million in Bangladesh, and another half a million in Indonesia, with the remainder being casualties of tribal civil wars in Nigeria, the Congo, Chad, and Sudan, or Nagas killed by Indians, Chinese killed by Malays, Tibetans killed by Chinese, Colombians killed by Colombians, Tutsis and Hutus killed by one another in Burundi, Catholics and Protestants in Ulster, Turks and Greeks in Cyprus, and Papuans and Indonesians in New Guinea. Europe's immunity from this killing spree came at a terrible price: the superpower confrontation that divided the continent, the energies exhausted in the killing of 70 million people from 1914 to 1945, and Moscow's sanguinary efforts to subdue separatist elements in the Soviet republics during the 1920s and 1930s all contributed to Europe's postwar stability.

Even more ahistorical and naive is the paradigm that the U.S. foreign-policy community insists on applying to internal conflicts. Guided by faith in the nostrums of the liberal tradition and by the mechanistic notion, learned in civics class, that a community is built by balancing competing interests, American foreign-policy experts urge societies riven by conflict to avoid "winner takes all" politics and to guarantee that regardless of election results, the weaker groups, too, will have a voice in national political and cultural affairs. To accomplish this, coalition governments, the guaranteed division of key offices, and a system of reciprocal vetoes are recommended. These devices, so the thinking goes, will ameliorate ethnic, nationalist, and religious divisions. And the experts agree that those divisions will be less likely to erupt in violent conflict if divided societies elevate tolerance and unity above ethnic, nationalist, or religious domination as their organizing principles.

All these measures may seem reasonable enough. But they depend upon a host of faulty assumptions, perhaps the most important being that the strongest group in a divided society will be willing to make major concessions—concessions that in fact jeopardize its preponderant position. The "solutions," then, presuppose agreement and stability as much as they secure them, for they can be implemented only when there is already a strong desire for compromise.

But, as the English historian Lewis Namier wrote in his discussion of nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe, "states are not created or destroyed, and frontiers redrawn or obliterated, by argument and majority votes; nations are freed, united, or broken by blood and iron, and not by a generous application of liberty." Despite the historical failure of reason and compromise in such situations, foreign-policy experts and officials continue to place great stock in reasonable solutions. Their ideas about settling internal conflicts are fundamentally distorted by their idealized view of America's own history and development.

SWALLOWING UP PEOPLES

We are all pluralists now; everyone favors "tolerance" and "diversity." We regard these qualities as central to the American creed and central to the "democratic values" the export of which has been the avowed aim of every U.S. President since Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Democracy assures a voice to each disparate group and thus, according to prevailing notions, gives rise to the American community, for from these competing voices come compromise and unity. America, therefore, is regarded as a highly successful model of a multi-ethnic, multicultural, multireligious, and polyglot society. Out of many we are one. With this understanding of their country's cultural and political development, U.S. statesmen and foreign-policy observers ingenuously and smugly ask fragmented societies, Can't you all get along, just as we do over here?

For 200 years Americans have been congratulating themselves on their happy ability to live together. They have taken as the model for their self-image J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's 1782 account of the United States, *Letters From an American Farmer*. Few observations on the American people have been quoted over the years with such self-satisfaction.

> Whence came all these peoples? they are a mixture of English, Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, Germans and Swedes. From this promiscuous breed, that race now called Americans have arisen. . . . What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. . . . Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men. . . .

Upholders of this ideal of American pluralism, however, must quote Crèvecoeur, for it is hard to find contemporaries who shared his view. Although non-English people had flocked to America in large numbers, mixed with settlers of English blood, and thereby lost their genetic and cultural distinctiveness, most observers painted a picture of this amalgamation very different from Crèvecoeur's; they understood that America was characterized by ethnic dominance, not ethnic pluralism.

In a typical account a Swedish minister visiting what he hoped would be the settlements of his countrymen along the Delaware River in 1745 was sad to report,

> I found in this country scarcely one genuine Swede left, the most of them are either in part or in whole on one side or other descended from English or Dutch parents. . . . The English are evidently swallowing up the people and the Swedish language is so corrupted that if I did not know the English, it would be impossible to understand the language of my dear Sweden.

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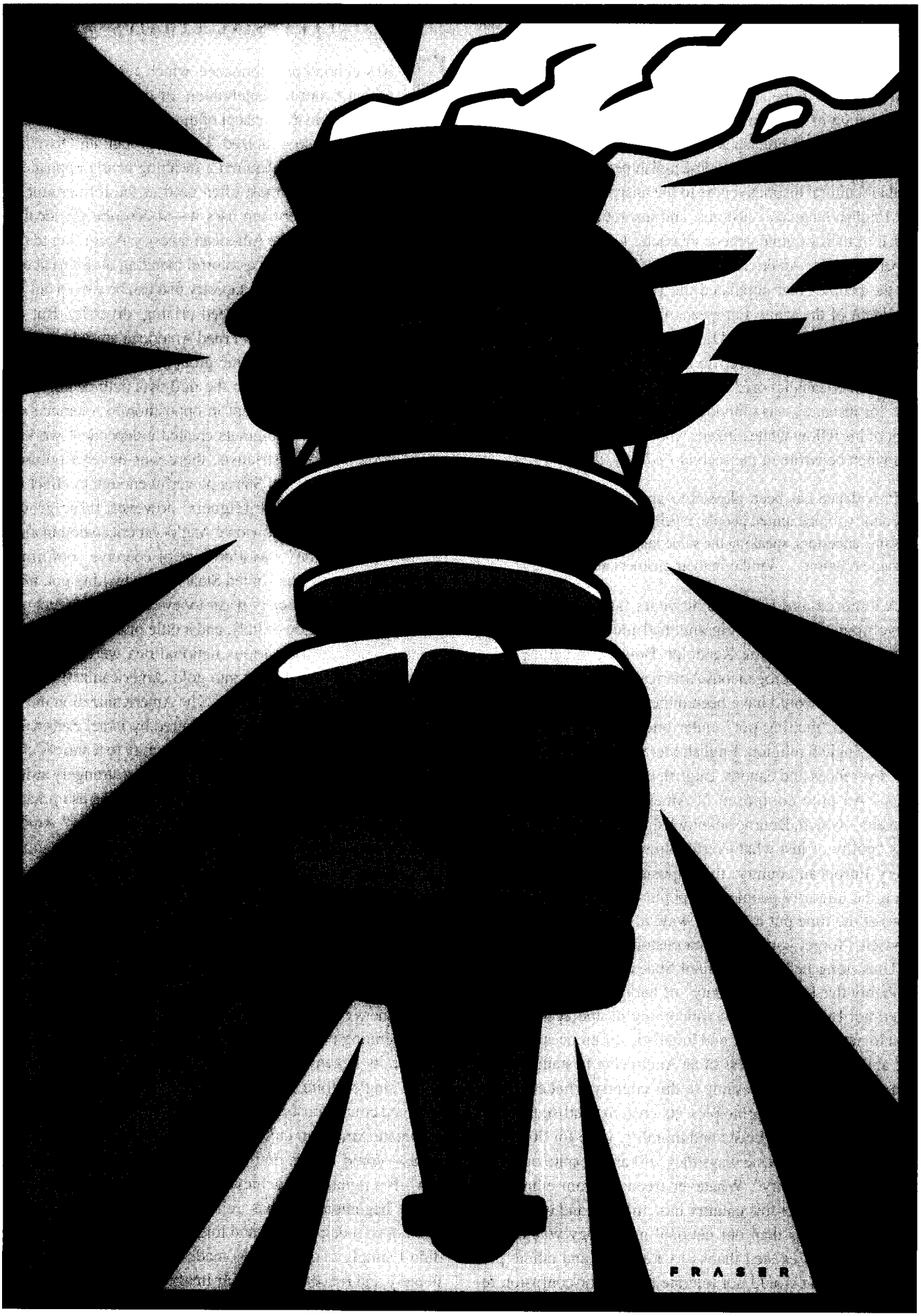

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The minister's lament is highly revealing. By crying out that the English are "swallowing up the people" and pointing to language as evidence, he correctly defined amalgamation and pluralism in the American context.

Although in 1790 only about 60 percent of the white U.S. population was of English origin, America was culturally quite homogeneous; most of the non-English people had lost much of their cultural distinctiveness to the unsparing dominance of the English language, customs, and institutions, and had lost much of their original genetic character to English numerical superiority. The American "nationality" was not a blending of all the peoples that populated the United States, or even an amalgam of the white Europeans inhabiting the country. An "American" was a modified Englishman. To become an American was to subject oneself to a hegemony so powerful that many Americans ignored or denied existing diversities. John Jay, for instance, was oblivious of the approximately 40 percent of his fellow white citizens who were of non-English origin when he wrote in the second *Federalist* paper,

> Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people; a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion . . . similar in their manners and customs. . . .

A hundred and twenty-nine years later, in 1916, after wave upon wave of immigrants had inundated the United States, the liberal critic Randolph Bourne, in calling for a cosmopolitan, heterogeneous American culture, described an America that would have been quite familiar to Jay. Bourne bewailed a "melting pot" under one aegis: "English snobberies, English religion, English literary styles, English literary reverences and canons, English ethics, English superiorities." An elite composed of Americans of Anglo-Saxon descent—which, Bourne acknowledged, included himself—was "guilty of just what every dominant race is guilty of in every European country: the imposition of its own culture upon the minority peoples." A popular guide for immigrant Jews at the time put it another way: to become American, it advised, "forget your past, your customs, and your ideals."

Thus, long before the United States' founding, and until probably the 1960s, the "unity" of the American people derived not from their warm welcoming of and accommodation to nationalist, ethnic, and linguistic differences but from the ability and willingness of an Anglo elite to stamp its image on other peoples coming to this country. That elite's religious and political principles, its customs and social relations, its standards of taste and morality, were for 300 years America's, and in basic ways they still are, despite our celebration of "diversity." Whatever freedom from ethnic and nationalist conflict this country has enjoyed (and it has been considerably less than our national mythology would have us believe) has existed thanks to a cultural and ethnic predominance that would not tolerate conflict or confusion regarding the national identity.

CLEANSING ETHNICS

THIS cultural predominance, which amounted to the repression, not the celebration, of ethnic diversity, was expressed in the concept of the melting pot that the pluralist Bourne had so criticized. Today, through an Orwellian process, that term has acquired a meaning nearly opposite to its original. Now it is most often used as the former ambassador Warren Zimmermann uses it—to describe the ideal of what might be called the American tapestry. According to this ideal, American society is a colorful blending of different ethnic and national elements, a tapestry that can be woven only in a society tolerant of, and indeed prizing, diversity. But the melting pot, an idea that governed American attitudes toward the various national and ethnic groups coming to the United States from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, was once recognized as a concept in opposition to tolerance and pluralism. Because immigrants created a dependent working class favored by industrialists, there was never a political movement in the United States powerful enough to effect the complete exclusion of foreigners; however, these groups would not be permitted to vitiate Anglo-American domination.

"Americanization" was a process of coercive conformity according to which the United States was a melting pot, not a tapestry. American society wasn't viewed as the product of a little of Russia, a little of Italy, and a little of Poland all mixed together. Instead the various nationalities were made into Americans as ore is refined into gold. Americanization purified them, eliminating the dross. The Americanization movement's "melting pot" pageants, inspired by Israel Zangwill's play, celebrated not tolerance but conformity to a narrow conception of American nationality by depicting strangely attired foreigners stepping into a huge pot and emerging as immaculate, well-dressed, accent-free "American-looking" Americans—that is, Anglo-Americans. Sinclair Lewis recognized the melting pot, in *Main Street*, as a means by which "the sound American customs absorbed without one trace of pollution another alien invasion." Americanization, then, although it did not cleanse America of its ethnic minorities, cleansed its minorities of their ethnicity.

For better or worse, the current fragmentation and directionlessness of American society is the result, above all, of a disintegrating elite's increasing inability or unwillingness to impose its hegemony on society as a whole. Nevertheless, that a single group whose proportion of the population has declined continuously throughout American history could so dominate American cultural and political life for three centuries—could in fact define what it meant to be an American—is a remarkable achievement.

The hegemony that has unified America has been at bottom not so much cultural and linguistic as physical. America didn't simply evolve; it was made by those who claimed it fiercely and rendered it in their image. Today's foreign-policy experts, among them Zbigniew Brzezinski, who charac-

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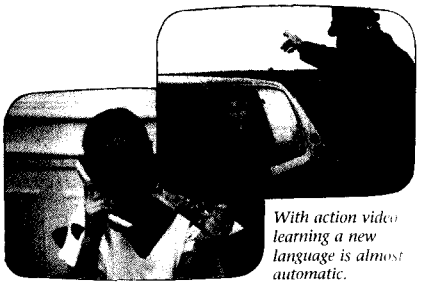

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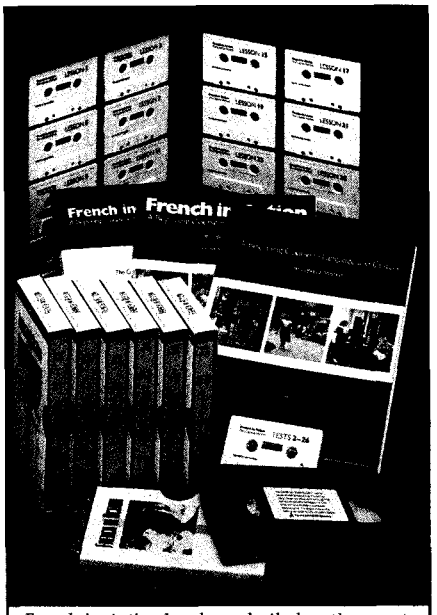

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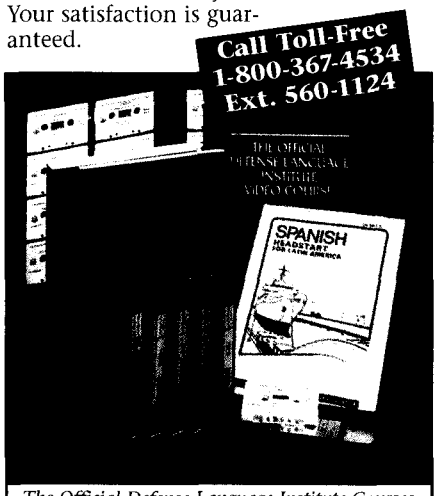

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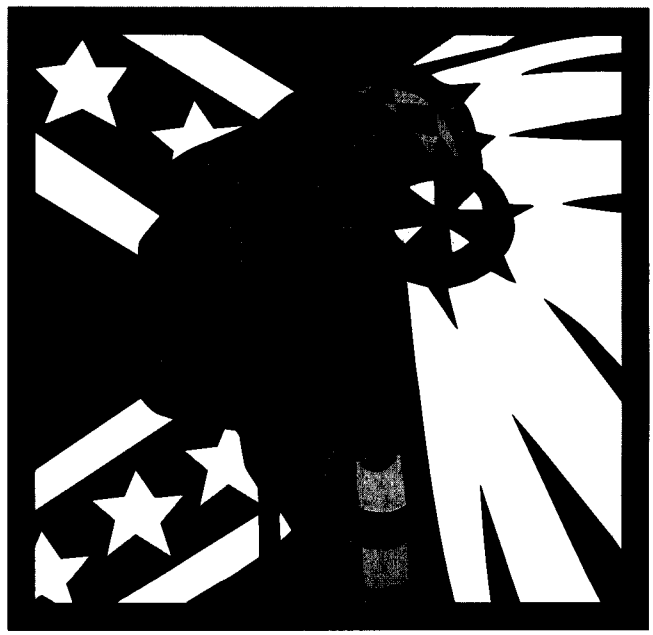
terize Russia as congenitally expansive, driven by an almost evil "imperial impulse" to dominate or absorb its bordering states, and who assert that as long as Russia does not respect the sovereignty of other states it cannot be a democracy, would arrive at a clearer perspective of such an "impulse" if they reflected on their own country's history and development. At least as much as other countries, the United States was formed by conquest and force, not by conciliation and compromise. For America, no less than for Russia, nation-building has been a ruthless undertaking. America's founders described the United States not as a country but as an empire, and for reasons of national security, economic development, and racial chauvinism (the same motivations impelling Russian "imperialism" today) they embarked on a course of imperial expansion.

This meant, of course, taking land that belonged to others and subjecting foreign peoples to American rule. Even though the North American continent was at the time inhabited by various Native American tribes and divided among Spain, Great Britain, and the United States, John Quincy Adams confidently declared in 1811 that it was "destined . . . to be peopled by one nation, speaking one language, professing one general system of religious and political principles, and accustomed to one general tenor of social usages and customs." To Adams and his contemporaries there was, of course, no doubt that America should effect this imperial union. A Kentuckian added a more mercenary gloss to Adams's prophecy, boasting that Americans were "as greedy after plunder as ever the old Romans were, Mexico glitters in our Eyes—the word is all we wait for." By 1846 America was ready to pounce. In a war of conquest—a war that Ulysses S. Grant judged "one of the most unjust waged by a stronger against a weaker nation"—a democratic United States swallowed present-day Texas, California, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming.

Moreover, building America required nearly 300 years of genocidal wars against Native Americans, a fact that impels today's historians to characterize American expansion on the continent as "invasion" rather than "settlement." These wars, one of the longest series of ethnic conflicts in modern history, were resolved not by power sharing but by obliteration. Although this record engenders much handwringing today, it is impossible to imagine the United States existing if a more reasonable course had been pursued. For from the "American" point of view, a reasonable accommodation would have required that, in Theodore Roosevelt's blunt phrase, the vast continent be set aside "as a game preserve." America's great ethnic struggle should have taught Americans that many conflicts are simply irreconcilable. As Representative Richard Wilde, of Georgia, asked with resignation in 1830, describing the United States' destruction of Native Americans as the price of its development, "What is history but the obituary of nations?"

YANKEE LEVIATHAN

Of course, just as the United States entered the final stage of its subjugation and liquidation of Native Americans, it nearly destroyed itself in the other central episode of its nation-building—a brutal and irreconcilable nationalist-separatist conflict in which one vision of America crushed another. The Civil War—a conflict that, the historian William Appleman Williams wrote, "undercuts the popular mythology that America is unique," and he added, "Only a nation that avoided such a conflict could make a serious claim to being fundamentally different"—is an apt example of how reasonable solutions to separatist conflicts hardly ever work. When the United States was established, the North and the South accepted each other as effectively



two distinct economic and ideological entities based on antagonistic systems of property: the North was industrial, liberal-bourgeois, and capitalist, while the South was agricultural, aristocratic, paternalistic, and anti-capitalist. To dampen sectional conflict, the Constitution, through the three-fifths clause and other devices, guaranteed the South a disproportionate voice in national politics. Yet this guaranteed outcome, so lauded by policy analysts today as a means of forestalling internal conflict, could not work in the long run for the United States. As the North's power and ambitions grew, it was unwilling to abide by arrangements based on a previous and obsolete calculus of relative strength, while the South was not satisfied with merely a diminishing respect for its view. It wanted to determine its own future without being subordinate to or dependent on an opposing, and increasingly threatening, ideology and political economy.

In the end the North's vision—of a powerful centralized state, a "Yankee Leviathan," deemed necessary for capitalist

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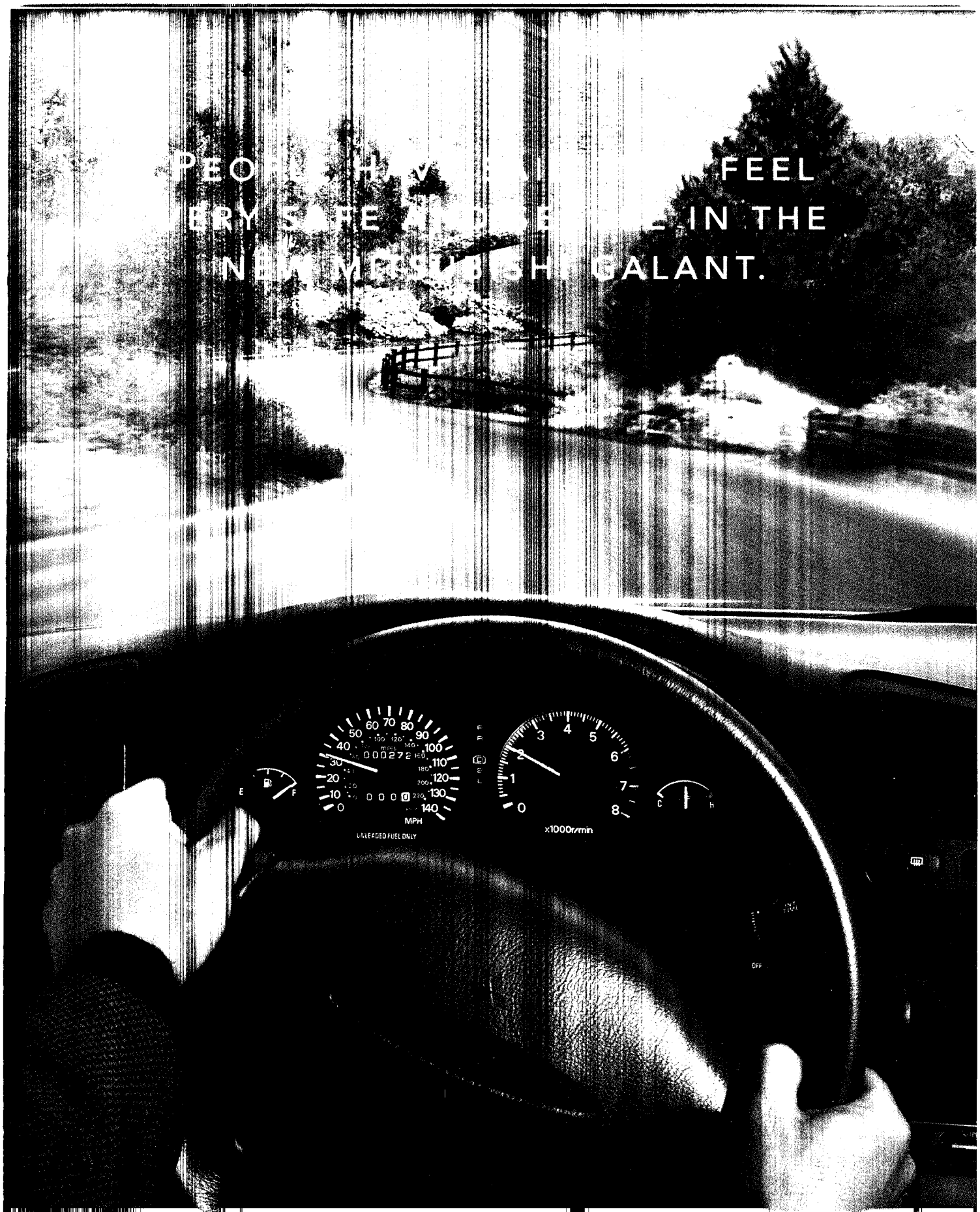

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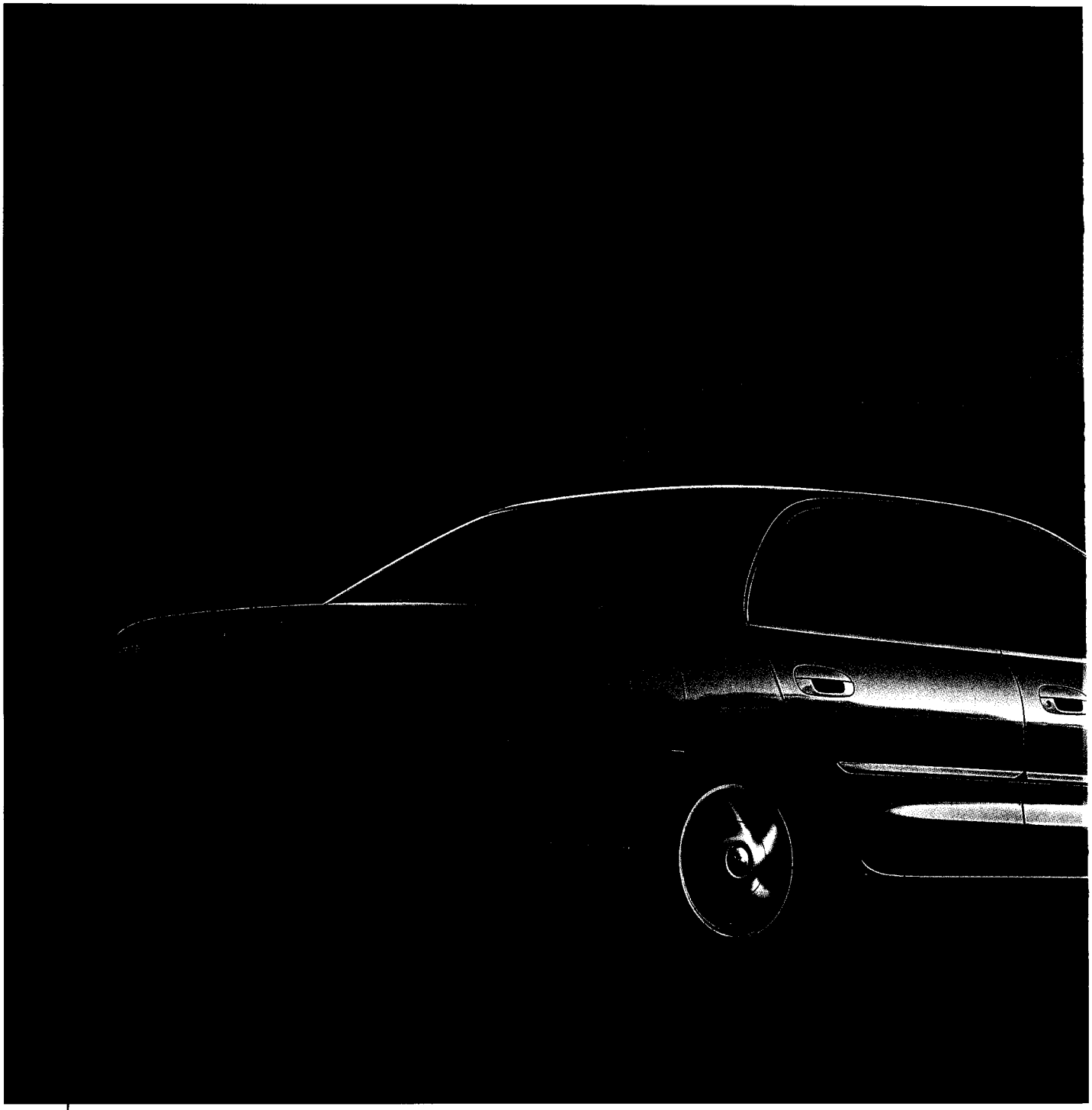

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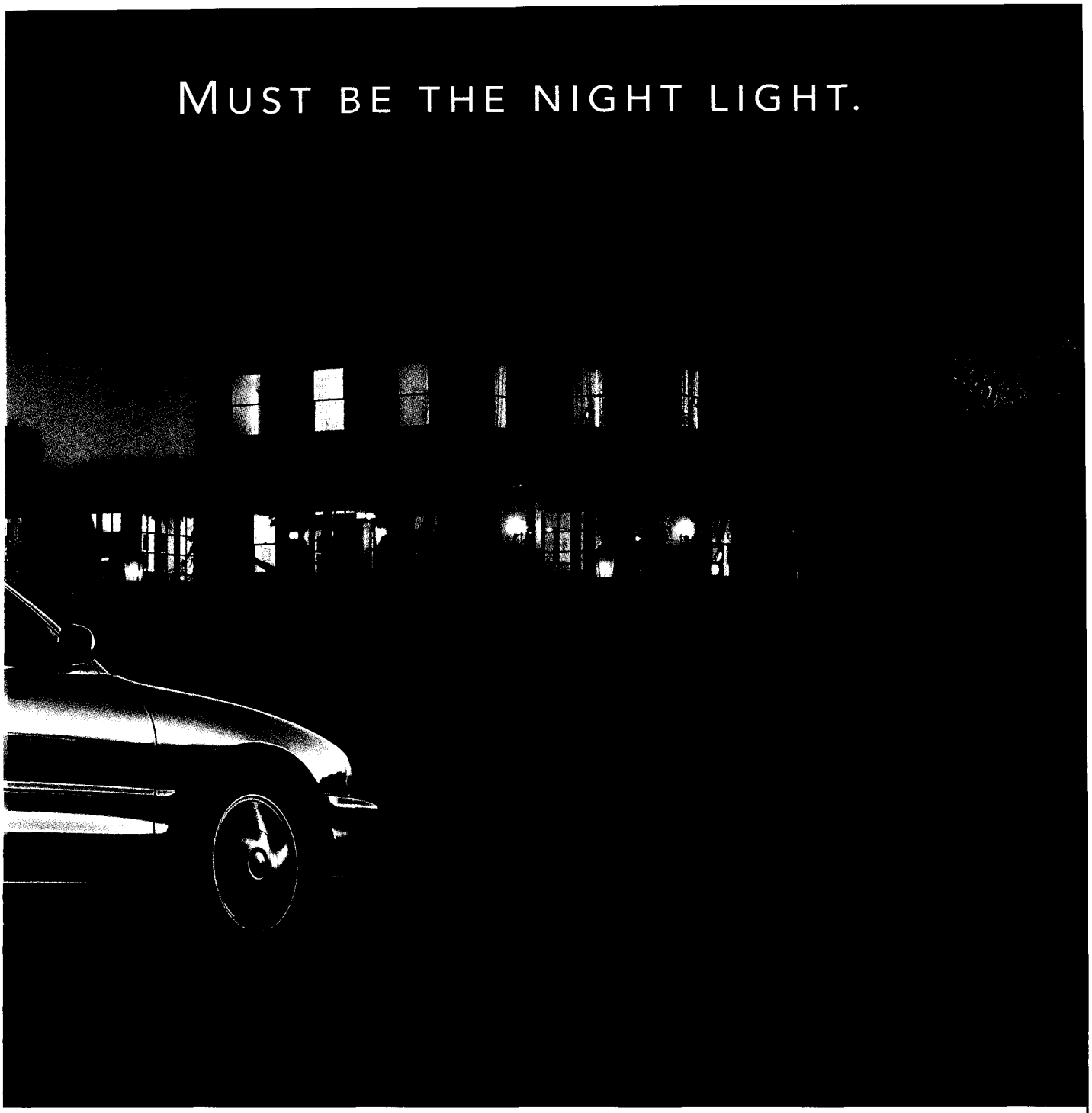

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development—emerged as the nation's. This vision, despite a persistent mythology promulgated by the victors, was triumphant not because it was intellectually or morally superior but because the North won a test of physical strength. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a better proof of the idea that *might makes right*—a doctrine supposedly anathema to liberals—than the outcome of our own Civil War. Eugene Genovese, a clear-eyed historian, has written,

> General Sherman, not the indomitable ideology of liberalism, marched through Georgia. The notion that America has always united on liberal principles breaks down here. . . . We should not forget that our liberal, confident, tolerant, and good-natured bourgeoisie, when for once confronted with a determined and powerful internal foe, forgot its commitment to reason together and reached for its revolver.

America didn't simply evolve. At least as much as other countries, the United States was formed by conquest and force, not by conciliation and compromise.

Our separatist conflict was followed not, as Yankees assert, by national reconciliation but by military occupation to impose a new political and economic order on the defeated land and by a century of regional hostility and estrangement.

WHITE OVER BLACK

AMERICA would have seen more conflicts between white Americans of different ethnic and religious backgrounds (and classes) if these had not been muted by whites' common hatred and fear of black Americans. There is an obvious problem with Crèvecoeur's discussion of the new American "race" in the passage quoted earlier. It excludes the very element of American society that has given America some of its most distinctive characteristics: the African. Even for Crèvecoeur, supposedly the voice of tolerance, there were severe limits on who could be included in the American mixture. The American was "either an European, or the descendant of an European"; the American could not be a black man or woman.

The struggle to make one nation of America's original two—black and white—is an enterprise that might never succeed, and that America's founders did not believe was possible. After all, Thomas Jefferson's pluralist vision, which established a standard of religious and political tolerance to which Americans still aspire, didn't extend to the black race. Jefferson's apologists are fond of quoting his statement, about black men and women, that "nothing is more certainly written in the book of fate than that these people are to be free." But they fail to quote his concluding clause: "Nor is it less certain that the two races, equally free, cannot live in the same government." Jefferson hated slavery because he knew it to be wrong, but he also hated it because it brought black people to America. Convinced that blacks were alien, inferior, and dangerous, Jefferson had a vision for America that required that they be not only emancipated but also expelled from the country. Advocating a program of ethnic cleansing, he was determined that blacks be removed "beyond the reach of mixture." Thus Jefferson's notions of democracy, upon which our ideals of pluralism are founded, depended not merely on racial supremacy but on racial homogeneity.

DEMOCRACY AS THE PROBLEM

WHEN considering other countries' internal conflicts, Americans should keep in mind what their own Civil War and Indian wars have proved: embattled minorities—nations within nations—don't just want respect; they want not to be treated as appendages of the majority's state. Israel gives its Arab minority within its pre-1967 borders the same voting rights it accords its Jewish citizens. In the interwar period the Sudeten Germans received respect and a disproportionate political voice from a democratic Czechoslovakia. Today the Quebecois are given the same treatment in Canadian national politics. Nevertheless, significant numbers within these minorities were or are unsatisfied with these arrangements, because solutions to civil conflicts which grant special guarantees to minorities almost always ask those minorities to accept less than they want. But another oft-touted solution—transforming nation-states into civil states, in which political power is not determined by membership in the majority's ethnic, nationalist, or religious group—demands that the majority accept far less than it wants and, indeed, less than it already has. To many within the majority, such a solution means sacrificing a living, breathing national character to the abstract and bloodless notion of a political community.

It is, for example, an unspoken rule of Israeli politics, applying as much to Labor as to Likud, that no Arab or Arab-dominated party shall be invited to participate in a political coalition. No matter how much Israel might want to ameliorate internal conflict, it won't jettison its national character

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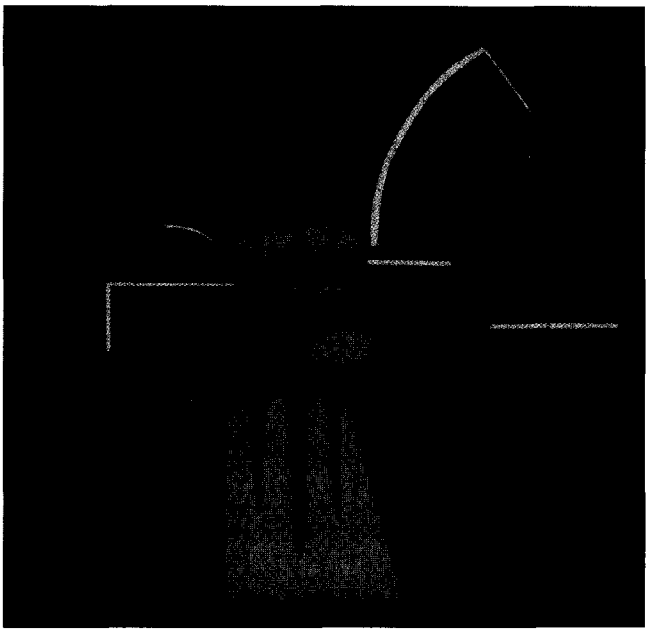
and dismantle that which defines its statehood. The promotion of the civil state and the weakening of the nation-state would be unacceptable not only to Israel but also to wholly secular states in the advanced industrialized community as well—to Germany and Japan, for example, which both tend to define citizens as those who belong to the dominant national group.

Divided societies face a conundrum: dissatisfied minorities want, at a minimum, a real voice in determining their future—but a real voice for the minority means real sacrifice for the majority. Canada's proposed 1992 Charlottetown Accord, for instance, was a model of reasonable techniques for forestalling internal conflict: predominantly Francophone Quebec was assured 25 percent of the seats in the House of Commons; three judges on the Supreme Court, out of nine, were to be drawn from Quebec; and bills affecting the French language and culture would have required a majority of the Senate as a whole and a majority of Francophone senators, too. These solutions, which might have assuaged the Francophone minority, were roundly rejected by Anglophone Canada, which was unwilling to relinquish the political power and the cultural dominance it maintained by virtue of being the majority. If such compromises are unworkable in a Western democracy, there is little reason to assume that they will work in the emerging and failed states that now concern the American national-security community.

The Clinton Administration, along with many Republican foreign-policy leaders, looks to a global democratic makeover to tame the seemingly intractable ethnic, nationalist, and separatist passions that have destabilized the post–Cold War world. "Democratic enlargement" has, in fact, emerged as the central tenet of the Administration's foreign policy. But for the reasons discussed above, it is, as John Stuart Mill observed, "next to impossible" to build a true democracy—as opposed to a system of majority tyranny—in a multi-ethnic society. Moreover, democracy hardly immunizes a society against internal conflict and separatism, as the 620,000 dead in America's Civil War attest. Democracy, which permits—in fact, encourages—competition for power and benefits among contesting groups, actually exacerbates internal tensions and conflicts.

Many of those policymakers who advocate democratic enlargement argue that before violence erupts in states divided by internal differences, America should urge those states to adopt democratic or, more accurately, power-sharing solutions. But in the past whenever such efforts have not been backed by U.S. force, they have failed, because those groups with power are disinclined to relinquish it voluntarily. Such blandishments amount, whatever the motivation, to crass interference in another state's internal affairs. How would Americans feel if Japan, out of a sincere desire to stabilize a dangerously divided United States, tried to pressure it to adopt the radical power-sharing solutions of Lani Guinier (the law professor whose nomination for a Justice Department post was withdrawn by the Clinton Administration) to effect a political order in which minorities were assured a more powerful voice in the U.S. political process?

Policymakers seek benign, if ineffective, democratic and power-sharing solutions to internal conflicts around the world, because historically workable solutions are unpalatable. In 1914 Prince Bernhard von Bulow, then a former German Chancellor, starkly summarized those solutions when he wrote that "in the struggle between nationalities one nation is the hammer, the other the anvil, one is the victor and one is the vanquished." Stability within divided societies is normally based on some form of domination, and once internal differences become violent, usually only the logic of force can lay them to rest.



Lamentably, the most stable and lasting solution to ethnic and nationalist conflicts has been ethnic cleansing and partition. The Czech Republic and Poland are today far more stable and more likely to remain democratic than they would otherwise be because of their ruthless decisions, following the Second World War, to expel forcibly the German minorities that had caused them so much trouble in the interwar years. Cyprus, too, became considerably more stable after the Turkish army partitioned it, forcing the relocation of 200,000 people, mostly Greek Cypriots, in 1974.

DOMESTIC INSECURITIES

MORE-reasonable power-sharing solutions sometimes do emerge in divided societies, but usually only after the opposing sides have exhausted themselves in a bloody contest. The struggle in the 1940s and 1950s between Colombia's liberals and conservatives, for

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instance, finally resulted in a textbook resolution of civil differences. Both factions were assured a voice in national politics, and the presidency alternated between the two parties. But the two sides were willing to compromise only after more than a quarter of a million Colombians had been killed in civil war. For both, compromise was the second-best solution, to which they agreed only after they had done their best to eradicate their opponents. Arriving at solutions—"reasonable" or not—can take centuries and will often be bloody. So, although the Pentagon, the State Department, and the Carnegie Endowment have spent enormous energy of late generating ideas and strategies for how America can prevent, tame, or end ENS conflicts, the United States really has only two options in these situations. Adopting a passive role once violence has erupted in a failed state, Washington can await the time when mutual exhaustion or the triumph of one group over another will create an opening for intervention in a purely peacekeeping capacity. Alternatively, the United States can effectively intervene, not by building civil societies or pacifying such conflicts but by helping one side impose its will on the other, as Turkey did in Cyprus. This sort of intervention, of course, can hardly be called "peacekeeping" or "peacemaking"; it is, however, what great-power intervention usually amounts to, as the United States has shown in, among other places, the Philippines (1898–1913), Haiti (1915–1934), Nicaragua (1912–1925; 1926–1933), and Vietnam (1961–1973).

Stability within divided societies is normally based on domination; once differences become violent, it takes force to lay them to rest.

Such intervention, which is nothing more than the naked exercise of power, should be an option only when specific, vital U.S. interests are threatened. They are not threatened in any actual or in most potential ethnic and separatist conflicts. Because "humane" solutions are ineffective, and because effective solutions are too inhumane for the United States to consider in any but the most threatening situations, America is largely impotent in the face of ENS wars.

Why, then, has the foreign-policy community made such conflicts the focus of so much of its post–Cold War strategizing? What, for instance, does Leslie Gelb mean when he insists that foreign civil wars are "the new core problem in post–Cold War politics" and that "democracies have a large practical as well as moral stake in finding reasonable responses" to them?

The motivation behind this latest summons to a foreign-policy crusade, as with earlier summonses, lies not in external threats but in our own insecurities. These conflicts scare us because we see in them an image of ourselves. After four centuries we are nagged by the facts that we do not "all get along" and that the apparent success of our own multi-ethnic and multicultural experiment might have been engendered not by tolerance but by hegemony. Without the dominance that once dictated, however ethnocentrically, what it meant to be an American, we are left with only tolerance and pluralism to hold us together. Unfortunately, the evidence from Los Angeles to New York, from Miami to Milwaukee, shows that such principles are not so powerful as we had believed and hoped. Afraid to face our own problems directly, we look elsewhere, and encourage other countries to prove to us that more pluralism and more tolerance are all that are needed to reunite divided societies. Thus for the past three years *Los Angeles Times* editorials have often shifted focus from racial divisions in the city and the debate over the changing ethnic and linguistic makeup of California to warn of what they define as the broad American interest at stake in the former Yugoslavia. In urging U.S. intervention there the *Times* argues, for instance, that the United States is a "citizen-based, multiethnic state," and that "it is safe only in a world where, in principle, all states are comparably organized," since "if ethnicity begins to replace citizenship as the basis for statehood, chaos would ensue, a chaos that would not leave America untouched." Or, as Warren Zimmermann solipsistically claims, "What happens in Bosnia matters to Americans." Externalizing our problems, he bizarrely sees a threat to the United States from the Bosnian Serbs because if their ideas prevailed here at home, our tolerant, multi-ethnic society would be jeopardized. Zimmermann uses Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s critique of American "ethnic ideologues"—who, according to Schlesinger, "have set themselves against the old American ideal of assimilation"—to indict the Bosnian Serbs for the same crime. In fact, however, the Bosnian Serbs' ideas are much closer to the "old American ideal of assimilation" than we would like to think.

A crusade in support of multinational, multicultural tolerance abroad really seeks to validate it at home. But attempting to validate a myth is futile. Before we export our myth, we had best recognize that we have not yet found a "reasonable" solution here, and that perhaps such a solution cannot be found.

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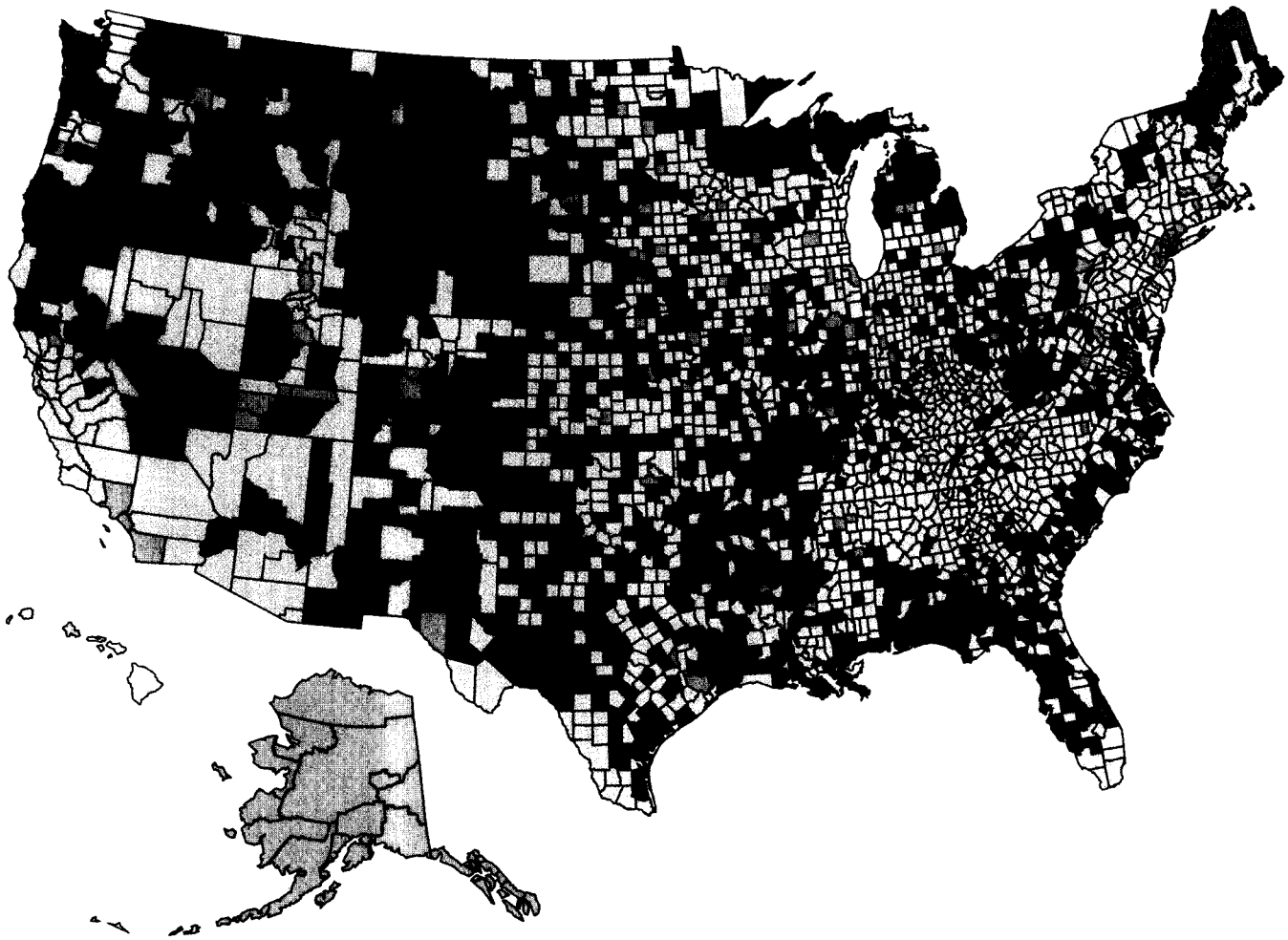
The Geography of Military Recruitment



DESPITE a continuing reduction in the size of the nation's Armed Forces, 200,000 young men and women are still enlisting annually. But the reduction, along with an increasing need for men and women who can operate high-tech equipment, has significantly changed the military's recruitment strategies. Military recruiters have grown familiar with the kinds of sophisticated advertising techniques and computerized geographic and market analysis that are routinely used to sell commercial products. As a result, recruiters can focus on the communities that are likely to yield the most qualified applicants.

The map, which highlights not the counties with the most enlistees but rather the counties where a large percentage of seventeen- to twenty-four-year-olds enlist, reveals strong regional patterns of recruitment. The Northwest and the Rockies, possibly because of their good public schools, conservative politics, and adventurous outdoor lifestyles, are leading sources of enlistees for all four services of the military. New England, in contrast, has seen a marked decrease in recruitment over the past decade. Because adults in New England tend to be more liberal than those in other parts of the country, recruiters in that region often find that their toughest customers are the parents of potential enlistees. Recruiters also have a hard time enlisting young people in the industrialized Midwest, where unemployment is low. The Southeast remains a bountiful source of recruits.

First-time enlistees as a percentage of all 17- to 24-year-olds, by county

- **1.8 to 25.9 percent**
- **1.1 to 1.79 percent**
- **0.40 to 1.09 percent**
- **0.39 percent or less**

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, 1992

As recruitment techniques and demands have changed in the post–Cold War era, so too has the demographic profile of enlistees. Today 98 percent of enlistees have high school diplomas. Most new recruits are from the middle class, but, not surprisingly, their parents tend to be in blue-collar rather than managerial or professional occupations. —*Eugene Peck*

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If You Sing Like That for Me

by AKHIL SHARMA

LATE one June afternoon, seven months after my wedding, I woke from a short, deep sleep in love with my husband. I did not know then, lying in bed and looking out the window at the line of gray clouds, that my love would last only a few hours and that I would never again care for Rajinder with the same urgency—never again in the five homes we would share and through the two daughters and one son we would also share, though unevenly and with great bitterness. I did not know this then, suddenly awake and only twenty-six, with a husband not much older, nor did I know that the memory of the coming hours would periodically overwhelm me throughout my life.

We were living in a small flat on the roof of a three-story house in Defense Colony, in New Delhi. Rajinder had signed the lease a week before our wedding. Two days after we married, he took me to the flat. I had thought I would be

Perhaps love is different in other countries, she thought, where

frightened entering my new home for the first time, but I was not. I felt very still that morning, watching Rajinder in his gray sweater bend over and open the padlock. Although it was cold, I wore only a pink silk sari and blouse, because I knew that my thick eyebrows, broad nose, and thin lips made me homely, and to win his love I must try especially hard to be appealing, even though I did not want to be.

The sun filled the living room through a window that took up half a wall and looked out onto the concrete roof. Rajinder went in first, holding the heavy brass padlock in his right hand. In the center of the room was a low plywood table with a thistle broom on top, and in a corner three plastic folding chairs lay collapsed on the floor. I followed a few steps behind Rajinder. The room was a white rectangle. Looking at it, I felt nothing. I saw the table and broom, the window grille with its drooping iron flowers, the dust in which we left our footprints, and I thought I should be feeling something—some anxiety, or fear, or curiosity. Perhaps even joy.

Illustrations by John Nickle

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a woman can say her husband's name, where one can be careless

"We can put the TV there," Rajinder said softly, standing before the window and pointing to the right corner of the living room. He was slightly overweight and wore sweaters that were a bit large for him. They made him appear humble, a small man aware of his smallness. The thick black frames of his glasses, his old-fashioned moustache, as thin as a scratch, and the fading hairline created an impression of thoughtfulness. "The sofa before the window." At that moment, and often that day, I would think of myself with his smallness forever, bearing his children, going where he went, having to open always to his touch, and whatever I was looking at would begin to waver, and I would want to run. Run down the curving dark stairs, fast, fast, through the colony's narrow streets, with my sandals loud and alone, until I got to the bus stand and the 52 came, and then at the ice factory I would change to the 10, and finally I would climb the wooden steps to my parents' flat and the door would be open and no one would have noticed that I had gone with some small man.

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I followed Rajinder into the bedroom, and the terror was gone, an open door now shut, and again I felt nothing, as if I were marble inside. The two rooms were exactly alike, except the bedroom was empty. "And there, the bed," Rajinder said, placing it with a slight wave of his hand against the wall across from the window. He spoke slowly and firmly, as if he were describing what was already there. "The fridge we can put right there," at the foot of the bed. Both were part of my dowry. Whenever he looked at me, I either said yes or nodded my head in agreement. We went outside and he showed me the kitchen and the bathroom, which were connected to the flat but could be entered only through doors opening onto the roof.

From the roof, a little after eleven, I watched Rajinder drive away on his scooter. He was going to my parents' flat in the Old Vegetable Market, where my dowry and our wedding gifts were stored. I had nothing to do while he was gone, so I wandered in and out of the flat and around the roof. Defense Colony was composed of rows of pale two- or three-story buildings. A small park, edged with eucalyptus trees, was behind our house.

Rajinder returned two hours later with his elder brother, Ashok, and a yellow van. It took three trips to bring the TV, the sofa, the fridge, the mixer, the steel plates, and my clothes. Each time they left, I wanted them never to return. Whenever they pulled up outside, Ashok pressed the horn, which played "Jingle Bells." I was frightened by Ashok, because, with his handlebar moustache and muscular forearms, he reminded me of my father's brothers, who, my mother claimed, beat their wives. Listening to his curses drift out of the stairwell each time he bumped against a wall while maneuvering the sofa, TV, and fridge up the stairs, I felt ashamed, as if he were cursing the dowry and, through it, me.

On the first trip they brought back two suitcases that my mother had packed with my clothes. I was cold, and when they left, I changed in the bedroom. My hands were trembling by then, and each time I swallowed, I felt a sharp pain in my throat that made my eyes water. Standing there in the room gray with dust, the light like cold, clear water, I felt sad and lonely and excited at being naked in an empty room in a place where no one knew me. I put on a sylvar kamij, but even completely covered by the big shirt and pants, I was cold. I added a sweater and socks, but the cold had slipped under my skin and lingered beneath my fingernails.

Rajinder did not appear to notice I had changed. I swept the rooms while the men were gone, and stacked the kitchen shelves with the steel plates, saucers, and spoons that had come as gifts. Rajinder and Ashok brought all the gifts except the bed, which was too big for them. It was raised to the roof by pulleys the next day. They were able to bring up the mattress, though, and the sight of it made me happy, for I knew I would fall asleep easily and that another eight hours would pass.

We did not eat lunch, but in the evening I made rotis and lentils on a kerosene stove. The kitchen had no light bulb, and I had only the stove's blue flame to see by. The icy wind swirled around my feet. Nearly thirty years later I can still remember that wind. I could eat only one roti, while Rajinder and Ashok had six each. We sat in the living room, and they spoke loudly of their family's farm, gasoline prices, politics in Haryana, and Indira Gandhi's government. I spoke once, saying that I liked Indira Gandhi, and Ashok said that was because I was a Delhi woman who wanted to see women in power. My throat hurt and I felt as if I were breathing steam.

Ashok left after dinner, and Rajinder and I were truly alone for the first time since our marriage. Our voices were so re-

spectful, we might have been in mourning. He took me silently in the bedroom, on the mattress beneath the window with the full moon peering in. When it was over and Rajinder was sleeping, I lifted myself on an elbow to look at him. I felt somehow that I could look at him more easily while he was asleep. I would not be nervous, trying to hide my scrutiny, and if the panic came, I could just hold on until it passed. I thought that if I could see him properly just once, I would no longer be frightened; I would know what kind of a man he was and what the future held. But the narrow mouth and the stiff, straight way he slept, with his arms folded across his chest, said one thing, and the long, dark eyelashes denied it. I stared at him until he started flickering, and then I closed my eyes.

THREE months earlier, when our parents introduced us, I did not think we would marry. The neutrality of Rajinder's features, across the restaurant table from me, reassured me that we would not meet after that dinner. It was not that I expected to marry someone particularly handsome. I was neither pretty nor talented, and my family was not rich. But I could not imagine spending my life with someone so anonymous. If asked, I would have been unable to tell what kind of man I wanted to marry, whether he should be handsome and funny. I was not even certain I wanted to marry, though at times I thought marriage would make me less lonely. What I wanted was to be with someone who could make me different, someone other than the person I was.

Rajinder did not appear to be such a man, and although the fact that we were meeting meant that our families approved of each other, I still felt safe. Twice before, my par-

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ents had sat on either side of me as I met men found through the matrimonial section of the Sunday *Times of India*. One received a job offer in Bombay, and Ma and Pitaji did not want to send me that far away with someone they could not be sure of. The other, who was very handsome and drove a motorcycle, had lied about his income. I was glad that he had lied, for what could such a handsome man find in me?

Those two introductions were also held in Vikrant, a two-story dosa restaurant across from the Amba cinema. I liked Vikrant, for I thought the place's obvious cheapness would be held against us. The evening that Rajinder and I met, Vikrant was crowded with people waiting for the six-to-nine show. We sat down and an adolescent waiter swept bits of sambhar and dosa from the table onto the floor. Footsteps upstairs caused flecks of blue paint to drift down.

As the dinner began, Rajinder's mother, a small, round woman with a pockmarked face, spoke of her sorrow that Rajinder's father had not lived to see his two sons reach manhood. Ashok, sitting on one side of Rajinder, nodded slowly and solemnly at this. Rajinder gave no indication of what he thought. After a moment of silence Pitaji, obese and bald, tilted slightly forward and said, "It's all in the stars. What can a man do?" The waiter returned with five glasses of water, his fingers dipped to the second joint in the water. Rajinder and I were supposed to speak, but I was nervous, despite my certainty that we would not marry, and could think of nothing to say. We did not open our mouths until we ordered our dosas. Pitaji, worried that we would spend the meal in silence, asked Rajinder, "Other than work, how do you like to spend your time?" Then, to impress Rajinder with his sophistication, he added in English, "What hobbies you have?" The door to the kitchen, a few tables from us, was open, and I saw a cow standing near a skillet.

"I like to read the newspaper. In college I played badminton," Rajinder answered in English. His voice was respectful, and he smoothed each word with his tongue before letting go.

"Anita sometimes reads the newspapers," Ma said, and then became quiet at the absurdity of her words.

The food came and we ate quickly and mostly in silence, though all of us made sure to leave a bit on the plate to show how full we were.

Rajinder's mother talked the most during the meal. She told us that Rajinder had always been favored over his elder brother—a beautiful, hardworking boy who obeyed his mother like God Ram—and how Rajinder had paid her back by being the first in the family to leave the farm in Bursa to attend college, where he got a master's, and by becoming a bank officer. To get to work from Bursa he had to commute two and a half hours every day. This was very strenuous, she said, and Rajinder had long ago reached the age for marriage, so he wished to set up a household in the city. "We want a city girl," his mother said loudly, as if boasting of her modernity. "With an education but a strong respect for tradition."

"Asha, Anita's younger sister, is finishing her Ph.D. in molecular biology and might be going to America in a year, for further studies," Ma said slowly, almost accidentally. She was a short, dark woman, so thin that her skin hung loose. "Two of my brothers are doctors; so is one sister. And I have one brother who is an engineer. I wanted Anita to be a doctor, but she was lazy and did not study." My mother and I loved each other, but sometimes something inside her would slip, and she would attack me, and she was so clever and I loved her so much that all I could do was feel helpless.

Dinner ended and I still had not spoken. When Rajinder said he did not want any dessert, I asked, "Do you like movies?" It was the only question I could think of, and I had felt pressured by Pitaji's stares.

"A little," Rajinder said seriously. After a pause he asked, "And you, do you like movies?"

"Yes," I said, and then, to be daring and to assert my personality, I added, "very much."

TWO days after that Pitaji asked me if I would mind marrying Rajinder, and because I could not think of any reason not to, I said all right. Still, I did not think we would marry. Something would come up. His family might decide that my B.A. and B.Ed. were not enough, or Rajinder might suddenly announce that he was in love with his typist.

The engagement occurred a month later, and although I was not allowed to attend the ceremony, Asha was, and she described everything. Rajinder sat cross-legged before the pandit and the holy fire. Pitaji's pants were too tight for him to fold his legs, and he had to keep a foot on either side of the fire. Ashok and his mother were on either side of Rajinder. The small pink room was crowded with Rajinder's aunts and uncles. The uncles, Asha said, were unshaven and smelled faintly of manure. The pandit chanted in Sanskrit and at certain points motioned for Pitaji to tie a red thread around Rajinder's right wrist and to place a packet of one hundred five-rupee bills in his lap.

Only then, as Asha, grinning, described the ceremony, did I realize that I would actually marry Rajinder. I was shocked. I seemed to be standing outside myself, a stranger, looking at two women, Anita and Asha, sitting on a brown sofa in a wide, bright room. We were two women, both of whom would cry if slapped, laugh if tickled. But one was doing her Ph.D. and possibly going to America, and the other, her elder sister, who was slow in school, was now going to marry and have children and grow old. Why will she go to America and I stay

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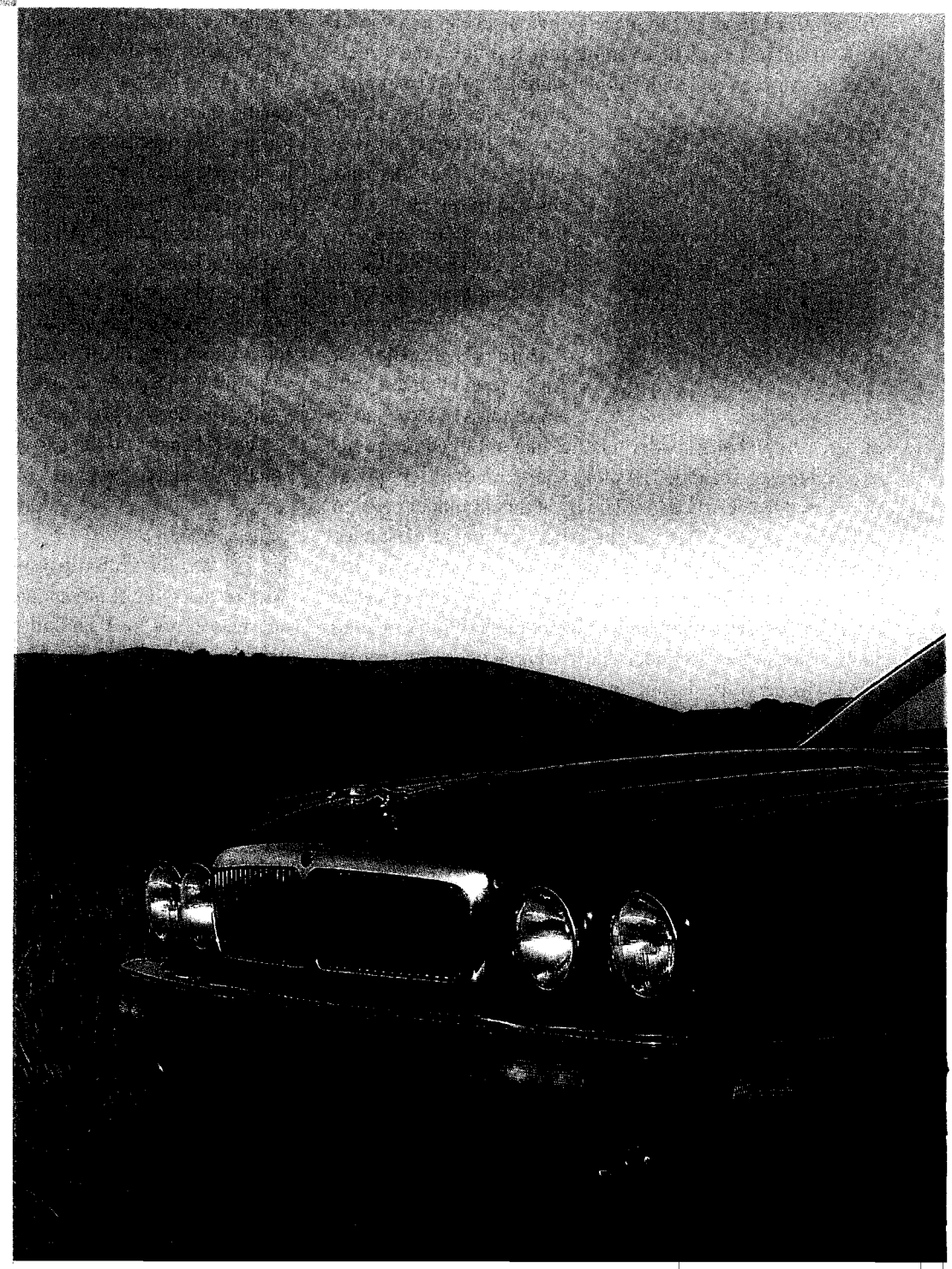

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here? I wanted to demand of someone, anyone. Why, when Pitaji took us out of school, saying what good was education for girls, did Asha, then only in third grade, go and re-enroll herself, while I waited for Pitaji to change his mind? I felt so sad I could not even hate Asha for her thoughtlessness.

As the days until the wedding evaporated, I had difficulty sleeping, and sometimes everything was lost in a sudden brightness. Often I woke at night and thought the engagement was a dream. Ma and Pitaji mentioned the marriage only in connection with the shopping involved. Once, Asha asked what I was feeling about the marriage, and I said, "What do you care?"

When I placed the necklace of marigolds around Rajinder's neck, to seal our marriage, I brushed my hand against his neck to confirm the reality of his presence. The pandit recited Sanskrit verses, occasionally pouring clarified butter into the holy fire, which we had just circled seven times. It is done, I thought. I am married now. I felt no different. I was wearing a bright-red silk sari and could smell the sourness of new cloth. People were surrounding us, many people. Movie songs blared over the loudspeakers. On the ground was a red-and-black-striped carpet. The tent above us had the same stripes. Rajinder draped a garland around my neck, and everyone began cheering. Their voices smothered the rumble of the night's traffic passing on the road outside the alley.

Although the celebration lasted another six hours, ending at about one in the morning, I did not remember most of it until many years later. I did not remember the two red thrones on which we sat and received the congratulations of women in pretty silk saris and men wearing handsome pants and shirts. I know about the cold only because of the photos showing vapor coming from people's mouths as they spoke. I still do not remember what I thought as I sat there. For nearly eight years I did not remember Ashok and his mother, Ma, Pitaji, and Asha getting in the car with us to go to the temple hostel where the people from Rajinder's side were housed. Nor did I remember walking through the long halls, with moisture on the once white walls, and seeing in rooms, long and wide, people sleeping on cots, mattresses without frames, blankets folded twice before being laid down. I did not remember all this until one evening eight years later, while wandering through Kamla Nagar market searching for a dress for Asha's first daughter. I was standing on the sidewalk looking at a stall display of hair bands and thinking of Asha's husband, a tall, yellow-haired American with a soft, open face, who I felt had made Asha happier and gentler. And then I began crying. People brushed past, trying to ignore me. I was so alone. I was thirty-three years old and so alone that I wanted to sit down on the sidewalk until someone came and picked me up.

I did remember Rajinder's opening the blue door to the room where we would spend our wedding night. Before we

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A VISIT

Gone are the days
when you could walk on water.
When you could walk.

The days are gone.
Only one day remains,
the one you're in.

The memory is no friend.
It can only tell you
what you no longer have:

a left hand you can use,
two feet that walk.
All the brain's gadgets.

Hello, hello.
The one hand that still works
grips, won't let go.

That is not a train.
There is no cricket.
Let's not panic.

Let's talk about axes,
which kinds are good,
the many names of wood.

This is how to build
a house, a boat, a tent.
No use; the toolbox
refuses to reveal its verbs;
the rasp, the plane, the awl,
revert to sullen metal.

Do you recognize anything? I said.
Anything familiar?
Yes, you said. The bed.

Better to watch the stream
that flows across the floor
and is made of sunlight,

the forest made of shadows;
better to watch the fireplace
which is now a beach.

—MARGARET ATWOOD

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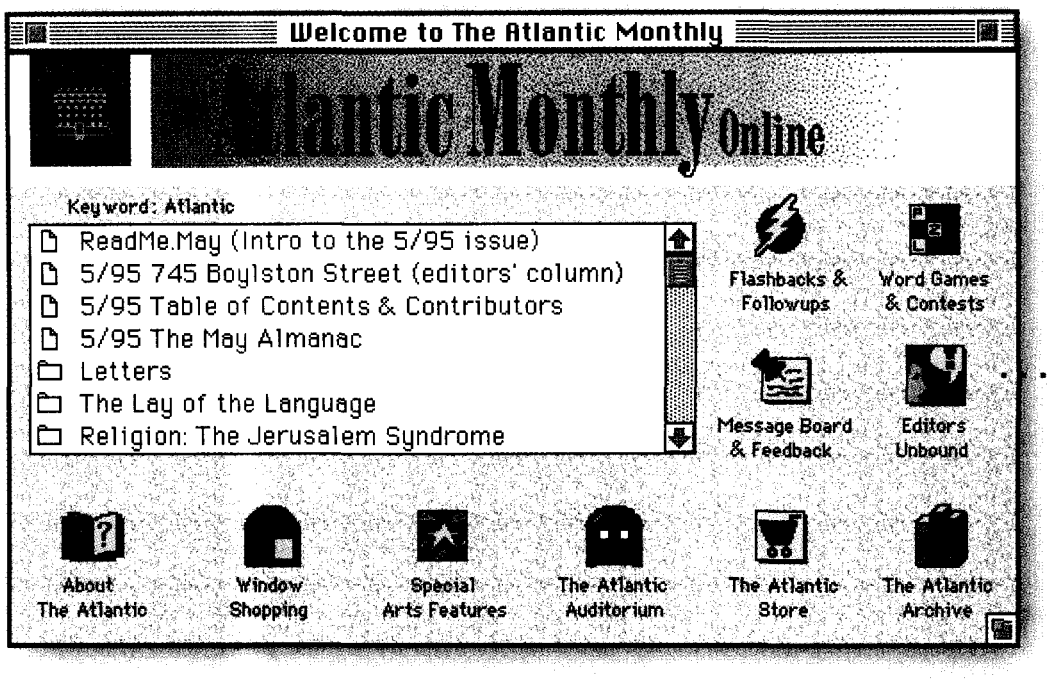
A ROOM FOR YOUR VIEWS

We invite you to drop by our "room" on America Online, where you'll find an interactive and intellectually stimulating supplement to our magazine. Recently redesigned, with all-new graphics and added content, The Atlantic Monthly Online offers thoughtful message-board discussions, live conferences with authors and editors, and other online-only features, such as "Flashbacks & Followups" and "Word Games & Contests," now appearing under their own icons. This month we're highlighting two online features:



HEADLINE BOX

The centerpiece of our room, the headline box contains The Atlantic*'s current issue. Articles come with added features, such as comments from our managing editor, interviews with contributors, primary source material, photos and artwork, and links to our message board, where you can post your opinions on the topic at hand.*

EDITORS UNBOUND

Here you'll find that our editors' work extends beyond 745 Boylston Street. This feature offers a window on their activities outside the magazine, with radio commentaries and book reviews by James Fallows, speeches and book excerpts by Cullen Murphy, articles and recipes from Corby Kummer, and more on the way.

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entered, we separated for a moment. Rajinder touched his mother's feet with his right hand and then touched his forehead with that hand. His mother embraced him. I did the same with each of my parents. As Ma held me, she whispered, "Earlier your father got drunk like the pig he is." Then Pitaji put his arms around me and said, "I love you," in English.

The English was what made me cry, even though everyone thought it was the grief of parting. The words reminded me of how Pitaji came home drunk after work once or twice a month and Ma, thin arms folded across her chest, stood in the doorway of his bedroom and watched him fumbling to undress. When I was young, he held me in his lap those nights, his arm tight around my waist, and spoke into my ear in English, as if to prove that he was sober. He would say, "No one loves me. You love me, don't you, my little sun-ripened mango? I try to be good. I work all day, but no one loves me." As he spoke, he rocked in place. He would be watching Ma to make sure she heard. Gradually his voice would become husky. He would cry slowly, gently, and when the tears began to come, he would let me go and continue rocking, lost gratefully in his own sadness. Sometimes he turned out the lights and cried silently in the dark for a half hour or more. Then he locked the door to his room and slept.

Those nights Ma offered dinner without speaking. Later she told her own story. But she did not cry, and although Ma knew how to let her voice falter as if the pain were too much to speak of, and her face crumpled with sorrow, I was more impressed by Pitaji's tears. Ma's story included some beautiful lines. Lines like "In higher secondary a teacher said, In seven years all the cells in our body change. So when Baby died, I thought, It will be all right. In seven years none of me will have touched Baby." Other lines were as fine, but this was Asha's favorite. It might have been what first interested her in microbiology. Ma would not eat dinner, but she sat with us on the floor and, leaning forward, told us how she had loved Pitaji once, but after Baby got sick and she kept sending telegrams to Beri for Pitaji to come home and he did not, she did not send a telegram about Baby's death. "What could he do," she would say, looking at the floor, "although he always cries so handsomely?" I was dazzled by her words —calling his tears handsome—in comparison with which Pitaji's ramblings appeared inept. But the grief of the tears seemed irrefutable. And because Ma loved Asha more than she did me, I was less compassionate toward her. When Pitaji awoke and asked for water to dissolve the herbs and medicines that he took to make himself vomit, I obeyed readily. When Pitaji spoke of love on my wedding night, the soft, wet vowels of his vomiting were what I remembered.

Rajinder closed and bolted the door. A double bed was in the center of the room, and near it a small table with a jug of water and two glasses. The room had yellow walls and smelled faintly of mildew. I stopped crying and suddenly felt very calm. I stood in the center of the room, a fold of the sari covering my head and falling before my eyes. I thought, I will just say this has been a terrible mistake. Rajinder lifted the sari's fold and, looking into my eyes, said he was very pleased to marry me. He was wearing a white silk kurta with tiny flowers embroidered around the neck and gold studs for buttons. He led me to the bed with his hand on my elbow and with a light squeeze let me know he wanted me to sit. He took off the loose shirt and suddenly looked small. *No, wait. I must tell you*, I said. His stomach drooped. What an ugly man, I thought. *No. Wait,* I said. He did not hear or I did not say. Louder. *You are a very nice man, I am sure*. The hard bed with the white sheet dotted with rose petals. The hands that undid the blouse and were disappointed by my small breasts. The ceiling was so far away. The moisture between my legs like breath on glass. Rajinder put his kurta back on and poured himself some water and then thought to offer me some.

Sleep was there, cool and dark, as soon as I closed my eyes. But around eight in the morning, when Rajinder shook me awake, I was exhausted. The door to our room was open, and I saw one of Rajinder's cousins, a fat, hairy man with a towel around his waist, walk past to the bathroom. He looked in and smiled broadly, and I felt ashamed. I was glad I had gotten up at some point in the night and wrapped the sari on again. I had not felt cold, but I had wanted to be completely covered.

Rajinder, Ashok, their mother, and I had breakfast in our room. We sat around the small table and ate rice and yogurt. I wanted to sleep. I wanted to tell them to go away, to stop talking about who had come last night and brought what, and who had not but might still be expected to send a gift—tell them they were boring, foolish people. Ashok and his mother spoke, while Rajinder just nodded. Their words were indistinct, as if coming from across a wide room, and I felt I was dreaming them. I wanted to close my eyes and rest my head on the table. "You eat like a bird," Rajinder's mother said, looking at me and smiling.

After breakfast we visited a widowed aunt of Rajinder's who had been unable to attend the wedding because of arthritis. She lived in a two-room flat covered with posters of gods and smelling of mothballs and old sweat. As she spoke of how carpenters and cobblers were moving in from the villages and passing themselves off as upper-castes, she drooled from the corners of her mouth. I was silent, except for when she asked me about my education and what dishes I liked to cook. As we left, she said, "A thousand years. A thousand children," and pressed fifty-one rupees into Rajinder's hands.

Then there was the long bus ride to Bursa. The roads were so bad that I kept being jolted awake, and my sleep became so fractured that I dreamed of the bus ride and being awakened. And in the village I saw grimy hens peering into the well, and women for whom I posed demurely in the courtyard. They sat in a circle around me and murmured compliments. My head and eyes were covered as they had been the night before, and as I stared at the floor, I fell asleep. I woke an hour later to their praise of my modesty. That night, in the dark room at the rear of the house, I was awakened by Ra-

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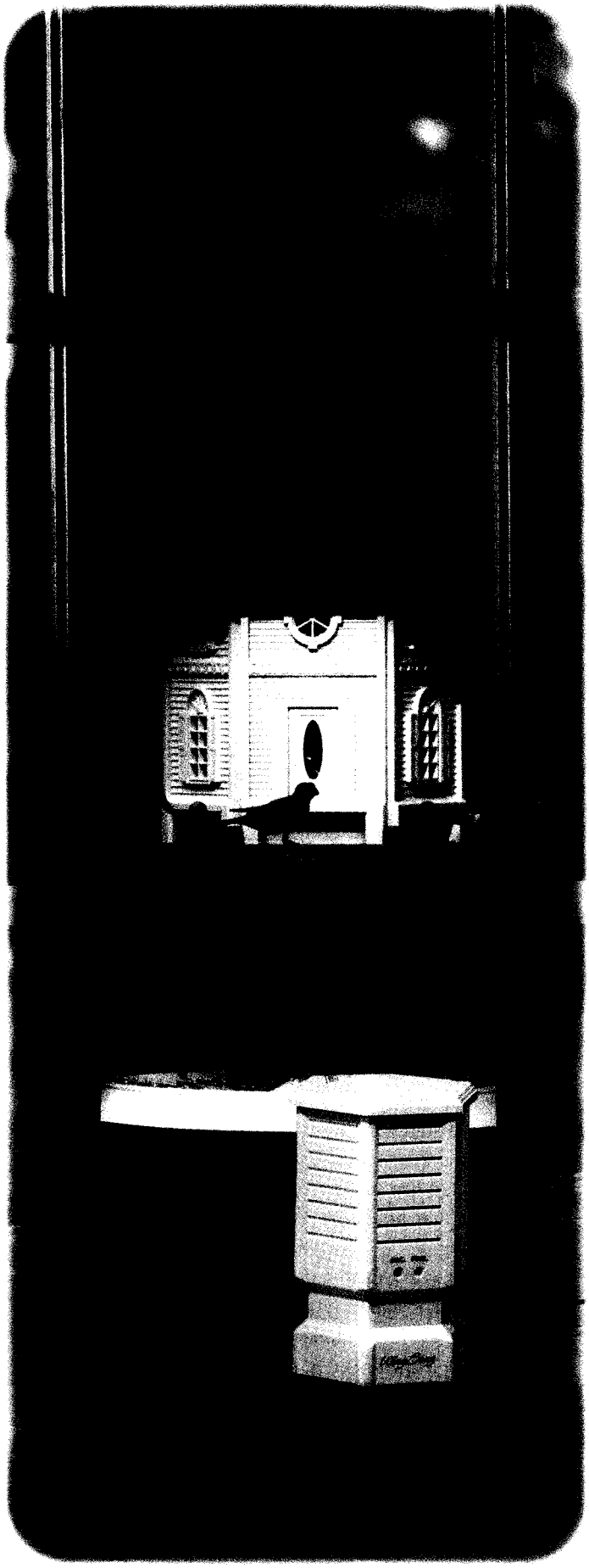

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jinder's digging between my legs, and although he tried to be gentle, I just wished it over. His face, flat and distorted, was above me, and his hands raised my nipples cruelly, resentful of being cheated, even though I never heard anger in Rajinder's voice. He was always polite. Even in bed he was formal. "Could you get on all fours, please?"

SO heavy and still did I feel on the first night in our new rooftop home, watching Rajinder sleep on the moonlight-soaked mattress, that I wanted the earth and sky to stop turning and for it always to be night. I did not want dawn to come and the day's activities to start again. I did not want to have to think and react to the world. I fell asleep then, only to wake in panic an hour later at the thought of the obscure life I would lead with Rajinder. Think slowly, I told myself, looking at Rajinder asleep with an arm thrown over his eyes. Slowly. I remembered the year between my B.A. and my B.Ed., when, through influence, I got a job as a typist in a candle factory. For nearly a month, upon reaching home after work, I wanted to cry, for I was terrified at the idea of giving up eight hours a day, a third of my life, to typing letters concerning supplies of wax. And then one day I noticed that I no longer felt afraid. I had learned to stop thinking. I floated above the days.

In the morning I had a fever, and the stillness it brought with it spread into the coming days. It hardened around me, so that I did not feel as if I were the one making love or cooking dinner or going home to see Ma and Pitaji and behaving there as I always had. No one guessed it was not me. Nothing could break through the stillness, not even Rajinder's learning to caress me before parting my legs, or my growing to know all the turns of the colony's alleys, and the shopkeepers calling me by name.

WINTER turned into spring, and the trees in the park swelled green. Rajinder was thoughtful and generous. Traveling for conferences to Baroda, Madras, Jaipur, Bangalore, he always brought back saris or other gifts. The week I had malaria, he came home every lunch hour and cooked gruel for me. On my twenty-sixth birthday he took me to the Taj Mahal, and arranged to have my family hidden in the flat when we returned in the evening. What a good man, I thought then, watching him standing proudly in a corner. What a good man, I thought, and was frightened, for that was not enough. I knew I needed something else, but I did not know what. Being his wife was not so bad. He did not make me do anything I did not want to, except make love, and even that was sometimes pleasant. I did not mind his being in the flat, and being alone is difficult. When he was away on his trips, I did not miss him, and he, I think, did not miss me, for he never mentioned it.

Summer came, and hot winds swept up from the Rajasthani deserts. The old cows that wander unattended on Delhi's streets began to die. The corpses lay untouched for a week sometimes; their tongues swelled and, cracking open the jaw, stuck out absurdly.

The heat was like a high-pitched buzzing that formed a film between flesh and bone, so that my skin felt thick and rubbery and I wished that I could just peel it off. I woke at four every morning to have an hour when breathing air would not be like inhaling liquid. By five the eastern edge of the sky was too bright to look at, even though the sun had yet to appear. I bathed both before and after breakfast and again after doing laundry but before lunch. As June progressed, and the very air seemed to whine under the heat's stress, I stopped eating lunch. Around two, before taking my nap, I would pour a few mugs of water on my head. I liked to lie on the bed imagining that the monsoon had come. Sometimes this made me sad, for the smell of wet earth and the sound of the rain have always made me feel as if I have been waiting for someone all my life and that person has not yet come. I dreamed often of living near the sea, in a house with a sloping red roof and bright-blue window frames, and woke happy, hearing water on sand.

And so the summer passed, slowly and vengefully, until the last week of June, when the *Times of India* began its countdown to the monsoon, and I awoke one afternoon in love with my husband.

I HAD returned home that day after spending two weeks with my parents. Pitaji had had a mild heart attack, and I took turns with Ma and Asha being with him in Safdarjung Hospital. The heart attack was no surprise, for Pitaji had became so fat that even his largest shirts had to be worn unbuttoned. So when I opened the door late one night and saw Asha with her fist up, ready to start banging again, I did not have to be told that Pitaji had woken screaming that his heart was breaking.

While I hurried a sari and blouse into a plastic bag, Asha leaned against a wall of our bedroom, drinking water. It was three. Rajinder, in his undershirt and pajama pants, sat on the bed's edge and stared at the floor. I felt no fear, perhaps because Asha had said the heart attack was not so bad, or perhaps because I just did not care. The rushing and the banging on doors appeared to be the properly melodramatic behavior when one's father might be dying.

An auto-rickshaw was waiting for us downstairs, triangular, small, with plasticized cloth covering its frame. It seemed like a vehicle for desperate people. Before getting in,

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I looked up and saw Rajinder. He was leaning against the railing. The moon was yellow and uneven behind him. I waved and he waved back. Such formalities, I thought, and then we were off, racing through dark, abandoned streets.

"Ma's fine. He screamed so loud," Asha said. She is a few inches taller than I am, and although she, too, is not pretty, she uses makeup that gives angles to her round face. Asha sat slightly turned on the seat so that she could face me. "A thousand times we told him, Lose weight," she said, shaking her head impatiently. "When the doctor gave him that diet, he said, 'Is that before or after breakfast?' " She paused and added in a tight whisper, "He's laughing now."

I felt lonely sitting there while the city was silent and dark and we talked of our father without concern. "He wants to die," I said softly. I enjoyed saying such serious words. "He is so unhappy. I think our hopes are made when we are young, and we can never adjust them to the real world. He was nearly national champion in wrestling, and for the past thirty-seven years he has been examining government schools to see that they have the right PE equipment. He loves eating, and that is as fine a way to die as any."

"If he wants to die, wonderful; I don't like him. But why is he making it difficult for us?"

Her directness shocked me and made me feel that my sentimentality was dishonest. The night air was still bitter from the evening traffic. "He is a good man," I said unsteadily.

"The way he treated us all. Ma is like a slave."

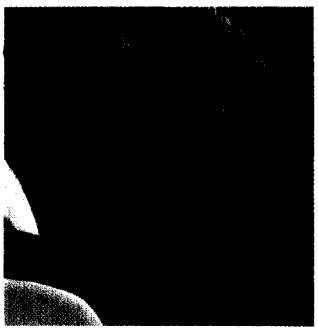
"They are just not good together. It's no one's fault."

"How can it be no one's fault?"

"His father was an alcoholic."

"How long can you use your parents as an excuse?"

I did not respond at first, for I thought Asha might be saying this because I had always used Ma and Pitaji to explain away my failures. Then I said, "Look how good he is compared with his brothers. He must have had something good inside that let him be gentler than them. We should love him for that part alone."



"That's what he is relying on. It's a big world. A lot of people are worth loving. Why love someone mediocre?"

Broken glass was in the hallways of the hospital, and someone had urinated in the elevator. When we came into the yellow room that Pitaji shared with five other men, he was asleep. His face looked like a shiny brown stone. He was on the bed nearest the window. Ma sat at the foot of his bed, her back to us, looking out at the fading night.

"He will be all right," I said.

Turning toward us, Ma said, "When he goes, he wants to make sure we all hurt." She was crying. "I thought I did not love him, but you can't live this long with a person and not love just a bit. He knew that. When they were bringing him here, he said, 'See what you've done, demoness.' "

Asha took Ma away, still crying. I spent the rest of the night dozing in a chair next to his bed.

We fell into a pattern. Ma usually came in the morning, around eight, and I replaced her, hours later. Asha would take my place at three and stay until six, and then Ma's brother or his sons would stay until Ma returned.

I had thought I would be afraid of being in the hospital, but it was very peaceful. Pitaji slept most of the day and night because of the medicines, waking up every now and then to ask for water and quickly falling asleep again. A nice boy named Rajeeve, who also was staying with his father, told me funny stories about his family. At night Asha and I slept on adjacent cots on the roof. Before she went to bed, she read five pages of an English dictionary. She had been accepted into a postdoctoral program in America. She did not brag about it as I would have. Like Ma, Asha worked very hard, as if that were the only way to live and one needn't talk about it, and as if, like Ma, she assumed that we are all equally fortunate. But sometimes Asha would shout a word at me—"Alluvial!"—and then look at me as if she was waiting for a response. Once, Rajinder came to drop off some clothes, but I was away. I did not see him or talk with him for the two weeks.

Sometimes Pitaji could not sleep and he would tell me stories of his father, a schoolteacher, who would take Pitaji with him to the saloon, so that someone would be there to guide him home when he was drunk. Pitaji was eight or nine then. His mother beat him for accompanying Dadaji, but Pitaji, his breath sounding as if it were coming through a wet cloth, said that he was afraid Dadaji would be made fun of if he walked home alone. Pitaji told the story quietly, as if he were talking about someone else, and as soon as he finished, he changed the subject. I could not tell whether Pitaji was being modest or was manipulating me by pretending modesty.

He slept most of the day, and I sat beside him, listening to his little green transistor radio. The June sun filled half the sky, and the groundskeeper walked around the courtyard of the hospital in wide circles with a water bag as large as a man's body slung over one shoulder. He was sprinkling water to keep the dust settled. Sometimes I hummed along to Lata Mangeshkar or Mohammed Rafi singing that grief is no letter to be passed around to whoever wants to read.

There were afternoons when Pitaji became restless and whispered conspiratorially that he had always loved me most. Watching his face, puffy from the drugs, his nose broad and covered with blackheads, as he said again that

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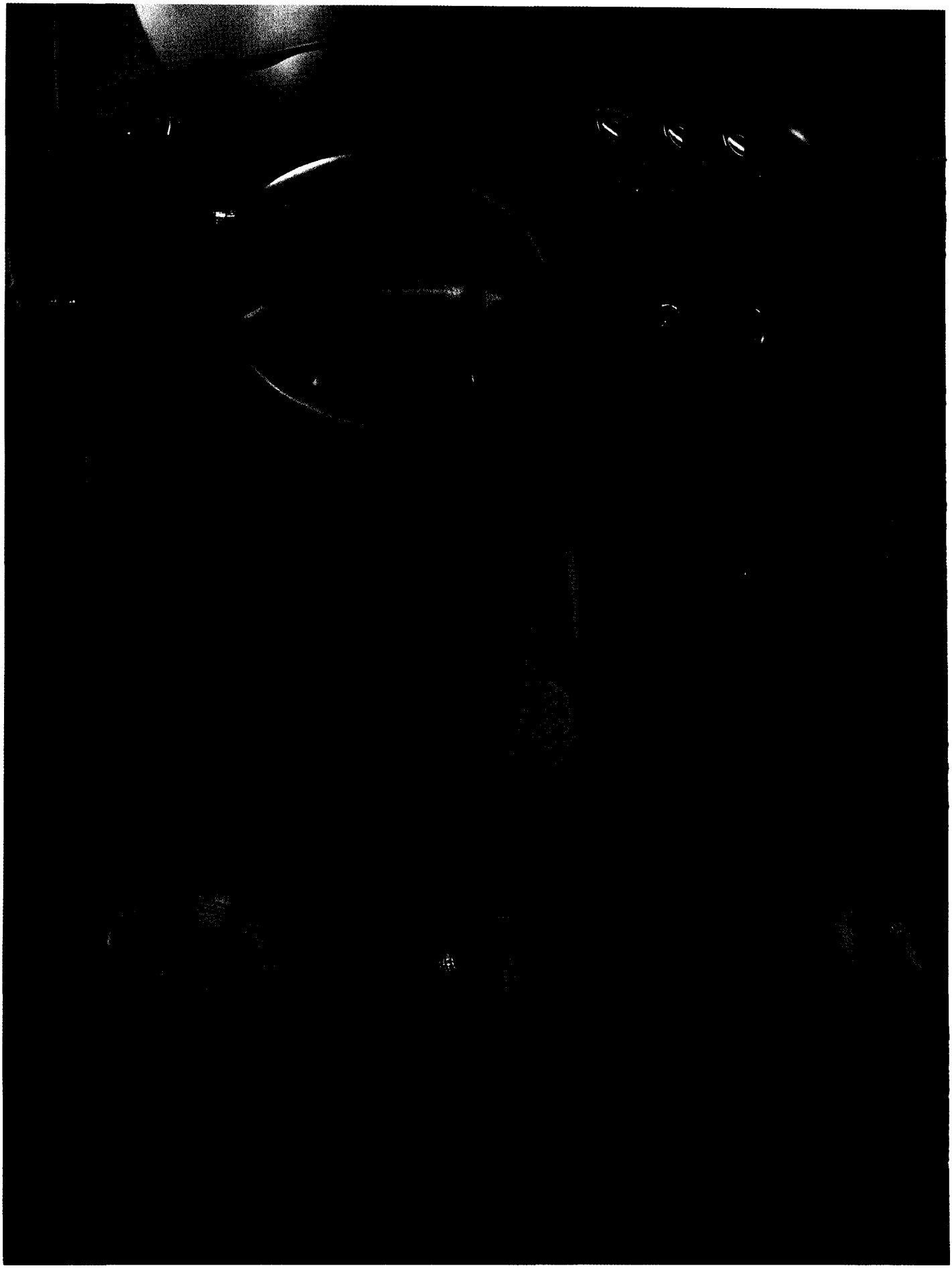

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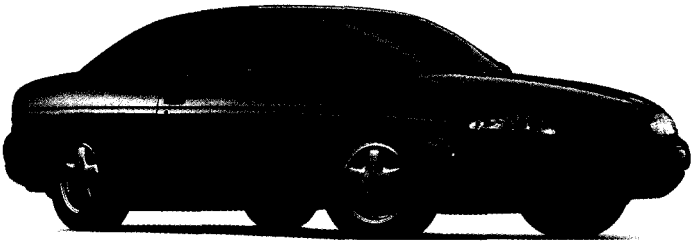

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Ma did not talk to him or that Asha was indifferent to his suffering, I felt exhausted. When he complained to Asha, "Your mother doesn't talk to me," she answered, "Maybe you aren't interesting."

Once, four or five days before we took him home, as he was complaining, I got up from the chair and went to look out the window. Beyond the courtyard was a string of yellow-and-black auto-rickshaws waiting under eucalyptus trees. I wanted desperately for Asha to come, so that I could leave, and bathe, and lie down to dream of a house with a red-tiled roof near the sea. "You must forgive me," Pitaji said as I looked out the window. I was surprised, for I could not remember his ever apologizing. "I sometimes forget that I will die soon and so act like a man who has many years left." I felt frightened, for I suddenly wanted to love him but could not trust him enough.

From then until we went home, Pitaji spoke little. Once, I forgot to bring his lunch from home and he did not complain, whereas before he would have screamed and tried to make me feel guilty. A few times he began crying to himself for no reason, and when I asked why, he did not answer.

Around eleven the day Pitaji was released, an ambulance carried Ma, Pitaji, and me to the Old Vegetable Market. Two orderlies, muscular men in white uniforms, carried him on a stretcher up three flights of stairs into the flat. The flat had four rooms and was part of a circle of dilapidated buildings that shared a courtyard. Fourteen or fifteen people turned out to watch Pitaji's return. Some of the very old women, sitting on cots in the courtyard, asked who Pitaji was, although he had lived there for twenty years. A few children climbed into the ambulance and played with the horn until they were chased out.

The orderlies laid Pitaji on the cot in his bedroom and left. The room was small and dark, smelling faintly of the kerosene with which the bookshelves were treated every other week to prevent termites. Traveling had tired him, and he fell asleep quickly. He woke as I was about to leave. Ma and I were speaking in whispers outside his bedroom.

"I am used to his screaming," Ma said. "He won't get any greasy food here. But once he can walk . . ."

"He seems to have changed."

"Right now he's afraid. Give him a few days and he'll return to normal. People can't change, even if they want to."

"What are you saying about me?" Pitaji tried to call out, but his voice was like wind on dry grass.

"You want something?" Ma asked.

"Water."

As I started toward the fridge, Ma said, "Nothing cold." The clay pot held only enough for one glass. I knelt beside the cot and helped Pitaji rise to a forty-five-degree angle. His heaviness and the weakness of his body moved me. Like a baby holding a bottle, Pitaji held the glass with both hands and made sucking noises as he drank. I lowered him when his shoulder muscles slackened. His eyes were red, and they moved about the room slowly. I wondered whether I could safely love him if I did not reveal my feelings.

"More?" he asked.

"Only fridge water," I said. Ma was clattering in the kitchen. "I am going home."

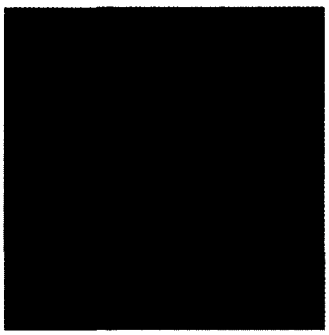
"Rajinder is good?" He looked at the ceiling while speaking.

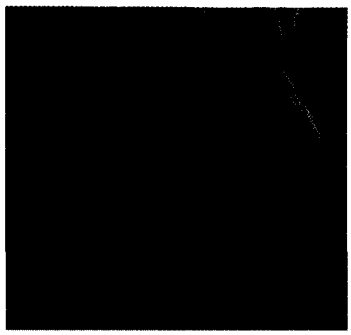
"Yes," I said. A handkerchief of light covered his face, and faint blue veins, like delicate, almost translucent roots, showed through the skin of his forehead. "The results for his exam came," I told him. "He will be promoted. He was second in Delhi." Pitaji closed his eyes. "Are you hurting?" I asked.

"I feel tired."

I, too, felt tired. I did not know what to do with my new love or whether it would last. "That will pass, the doctor said. Why don't you sleep?"

"I don't want to," he said loudly, and my love drew back.





"I must go," I said, but made no move to.

"Forgive me," he said, and again I was surprised. "I am not worried usually, but I get frightened sometimes. Sometimes I dream that the heaviness is dirt. What an awful thing to be a Muslim or a Christian." He spoke slowly, and I felt my love returning. "Once, I dreamed of Baby's ghost."

"Oh."

"He was eight or nine and did not recognize me. He did not look like me. I was surprised, because he was my son and I had always expected him to look like me."

I felt exhausted. Something about the story was both awkward and polished, which indicated deceit. But Pitaji never lied completely, and the tiring part was not knowing. "God will forgive you," I said. But why should he? I thought. Why do people always think hurting others is all right, as long as they hurt themselves as well?

"Your mother has not."

I placed my hand on his, knowing that I was already in the trap. "Shhh."

"At your birthday, when she sang, I said, 'If you sing like that for me every day, I will love you forever.'"

"She loves you. She worries about you."

"That's not the same. When I tell Asha this, she tells me I'm sentimental. Ratha loved me once. But she cannot forgive. What happened so long ago, she cannot forgive." He was blinking rapidly, preparing to cry. "But that is a lie. She

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does not love me because," and he began crying without making a sound, "I did not love her for so long."

"Shhh. She loves you. She was just saying 'Oh, I love him so. I hope he gets better, for I love him so.'"

"Ratha could have loved me a little. She could have loved me twenty for my eleven." He was sobbing.

"Shhh. Shhh. Shhh." I wanted to run away, far away, and be someone else.

THE sleep that afternoon was like falling. I lay down, closed my eyes, and plummeted. I woke as suddenly, without any half memories of dreams, into a silence that meant that the power was gone, and the ceiling fan was still, and the fridge was slowly warming.

It was cool, I noticed, unsurprised by the monsoon's approach—for I was in love. The window curtains stirred, revealing TV antennas and distant gray clouds and a few sparrows wheeling in the air. The sheet lay bunched at my feet. I felt gigantic. My legs stretched thousands of miles; my head rested in the Himalayas and my breath brought the world rain. If I stood up, I would scrape against the sky. But I was small and compact and distilled, too. I am in love, I thought, and a raspy voice echoed the words in my head, causing me to panic and lose my sense of omnipotence for a moment. I will love Rajinder slowly and carefully and cunningly, I thought, and suddenly felt peaceful again, as if I were a lake and the world could only form ripples on my surface, while the calm beneath continued in solitude. Time seemed endless, and I would surely have the minutes and seconds needed to plan a method of preserving this love, like the feeling in your stomach when you are in a car going swiftly down a hill. Don't worry, I thought, and I no longer did. My mind obeyed me limply, as if a terrible exhaustion had worn away all rebellion.

I got up and swung my legs off the bed. I was surprised that my love was not disturbed by my physical movements. I walked out onto the roof. The wind ruffled the treetops and small, gray clouds slid across the cool, pale sky. On the street eight or nine young boys played cricket. The school year had just started, and the children played desperately, as if they must run faster, leap higher, to recapture the hours spent indoors.

Tell me your stories, I would ask him. Pour them into me, so that I know everything you have ever loved or been scared of or laughed at. But thinking this, I became uneasy and feared that when I actually saw him, my love would fade and I would find my tongue thick and unresponsive. What should I say? I woke this afternoon in love with you. I love you too, he would answer. No, no, you see, I really love you. I love you so much that I think anything is possible, that I will live forever. Oh, he would say, and I would feel my love rush out of me.

I must say nothing at first, I decided. Slowly I will win his love. I will spoil him, and he will fall in love with me. And as long as he loves me, I will be able to love him. I will love him like a camera that closes at too much light and opens at too little, so his blemishes will never mar my love.

I watched the cricket game to the end. I felt very happy standing there, as if I had just discovered some profound secret. When the children dispersed, around five, I knew Rajinder would be home soon.

I bathed and changed into new clothes. I stood before the small mirror in the armoire as I dressed. Uneven brown aureoles, a flat stomach, the veins in my feet like pen marks. Will this be enough? I wondered. Once he loves me, I told myself. I lifted my arms and tried to smell the plantlike odor of my perspiration. I wore a bright-red cotton sari. What will I say first? *Namastay*—how was your day? With the informal "you." How was your day? The words felt strange, for I had never before used the informal with him. I had, as a show of modesty, never even used his name, except on the night before my wedding, when I said it over and over to myself to see how it felt—like nothing. Now when I said "Rajinder," the three syllables had too many edges, and again I doubted that he would love me. "Rajinder, Rajinder," I said rapidly several times, until it no longer felt strange. He will love me because to do otherwise would be too lonely, because I will love him so. I heard a scooter stopping outside the building and knew that he had come home.

My stomach was small and hard as I walked onto the roof. The dark clouds made it appear as if it were seven instead of five-thirty. I saw him roll the scooter into the courtyard and I felt happy. He parked the scooter and took off his gray helmet. He combed his hair carefully to hide the growing bald spot. The deliberateness of the way he tucked the comb into his back pocket overwhelmed me with tenderness. We will love each other gently and carefully, I thought.

I waited for him to rise out of the stairwell. The wind made my petticoat, drying on the clothesline, go *clap, clap*. I was smiling rigidly. How was your day? How *was* your day? Was your day good? Don't be so afraid, I told myself. What does it matter how you say hello? Tomorrow will come, and the day after, and the day after that.

His steps sounded like a shuffle. Leather rubbing against stone. Something forlorn and steady in the sound made me feel as if I were twenty years older and this were a game I should stop or I might get hurt. Rajinder, Rajinder, Rajinder, how are you?

First the head: oval, high forehead, handsome eyebrows. Then the not so broad but not so narrow shoulders. The top two buttons of the cream shirt were opened, revealing an un-

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dershirt and some hair. The two weeks had not changed him, yet seeing him, I felt as if he were somehow different, denser.

"How was your day?" I asked him, while he was still in the stairwell.

"All right," he said, stepping onto the balcony. He smiled, and I felt happy. His helmet was in his left hand and he had a plastic bag of mangoes in his right. "When did you get home?" The "you" was informal, and I felt a surge of relief. He will not resist, I thought.

"A little after three."

I followed him into the bedroom. He placed the helmet on the windowsill and the mangoes in the refrigerator. His careful way of folding the plastic bag before placing it in the basket on top of the refrigerator moved me. "Your father is fine?" I did not say anything.

Rajinder walked to the sink on the outside bathroom wall. I stood in the bedroom doorway and watched him wash his hands and face with soap. Before putting the chunk of soap down, he rinsed it of foam, and only then did he pour water on himself. He used a thin washcloth hanging on a nearby hook for drying.

"Yes," I said.

"What did the doctor say?" he asked, turning toward me. He is like a black diamond, I thought.

She said, I love you. "She said he must lose weight and watch what he eats. Nothing fattening. That he should rest at first and then start exercising. Walking would be best."

I watched Rajinder hang his shirt by the collar tips on the clothesline, and suddenly felt sad at the rigorous attention to detail necessary to preserve love. Perhaps love is different in other countries, I thought, where the climate is cooler, where a woman can say her husband's name, where the power does not go out every day, where not every clerk demands a bribe. That must be a different type of love, I thought, where one can be careless.

"It will rain tonight," he said, looking at the sky.

The eucalyptus trees shook their heads side to side. "The rain always makes me feel as if I am waiting for someone," I said, and then regretted saying it, for Rajinder was not paying attention, and perhaps it could have been said better. "Why don't you sit on the balcony, and I will make sherbet to drink?"

He took a chair and the newspaper with him. The fridge water was warm, and I felt sad again at the need for constant vigilance. I made the drink and gave him his glass. I placed mine on the floor and went to get a chair. A fruit seller passed by, calling out in a reedy voice, "Sweet, sweet mangoes. Sweeter than first love." On the roof directly across, a boy seven or eight years old was trying to fly a large purple kite. I sat down beside Rajinder and waited for him to look up so that I could interrupt his reading. When Rajinder looked away from the paper to take a sip of sherbet, I asked, "Did you fly kites?"

"A little," he answered, looking at the boy. "Ashok bought some with the money he earned, and he would let me fly them sometimes." The fact that his father had died when he was young made me hopeful, for I thought that one must suffer and be lonely before one can love.

"Do you like Ashok?"

"He is my brother," he answered, shrugging and looking at the newspaper. He took a sip of the sherbet. I felt hurt, as if he had reprimanded me.

I waited until seven for the power to return; then I gave up and started to prepare dinner in the dark. I sat beside Rajinder until then. I felt happy and excited and frightened being beside him. We spoke about Asha's going to America, though Rajinder did not want to talk about this. Rajinder had been the most educated member of his and my family and resented the idea that Asha would soon assume that position.

As I cooked in the kitchen, Rajinder sat on the balcony and listened to the radio. "This is Akashwani," the announcer said, and then music like horses racing played whenever a new program was about to start. It was very hot in the kitchen, and every now and then I stepped onto the roof to look at the curve of Rajinder's neck and confirm that the tenderness was still there.

We ate in the living room. Rajinder chewed slowly and was mostly silent. Once he complimented me on my cooking. "What are you thinking?" I asked. He appeared not to have heard. Tell me! Tell me! Tell me! I thought, and was shocked by the urgency I felt.

A candle on the television made pillars of shadows rise and collapse on the walls. I searched for something to start a conversation with. "Pitaji began crying when I left."

"You could have stayed a few more days," he said.

"I did not want to." I thought of adding, "I missed you," but that would have been a lie, and I would have felt embarrassed saying it, when he had not missed me.

Rajinder mixed black pepper with his yogurt. "Did you tell him you would visit soon?"

"No. I think he was crying because he was lonely."

"He should have more courage." Rajinder did not like Pitaji, thought him weak-willed, although Rajinder had never told me that. He knew Pitaji drank, but Rajinder never referred to this, for which I was grateful. "He is old and must remember that shadows creep into one's heart at his age." The shutter of a bedroom window began slamming, and I got up to latch it shut.

I washed the dishes while Rajinder bathed. When he came out, dressed in his white kurta pajamas, with his hair slicked back, I was standing near the railing at the roof's edge, looking out beyond the darkness of our neighborhood at a distant ribbon of light. I was tired from the nervousness I had been feeling all evening. Rajinder came up behind me and asked, "Won't you bathe?" I suddenly doubted my ability to guard my love. Bathe so we can have sex. His words were too deliberately full of the unsaid, and so felt

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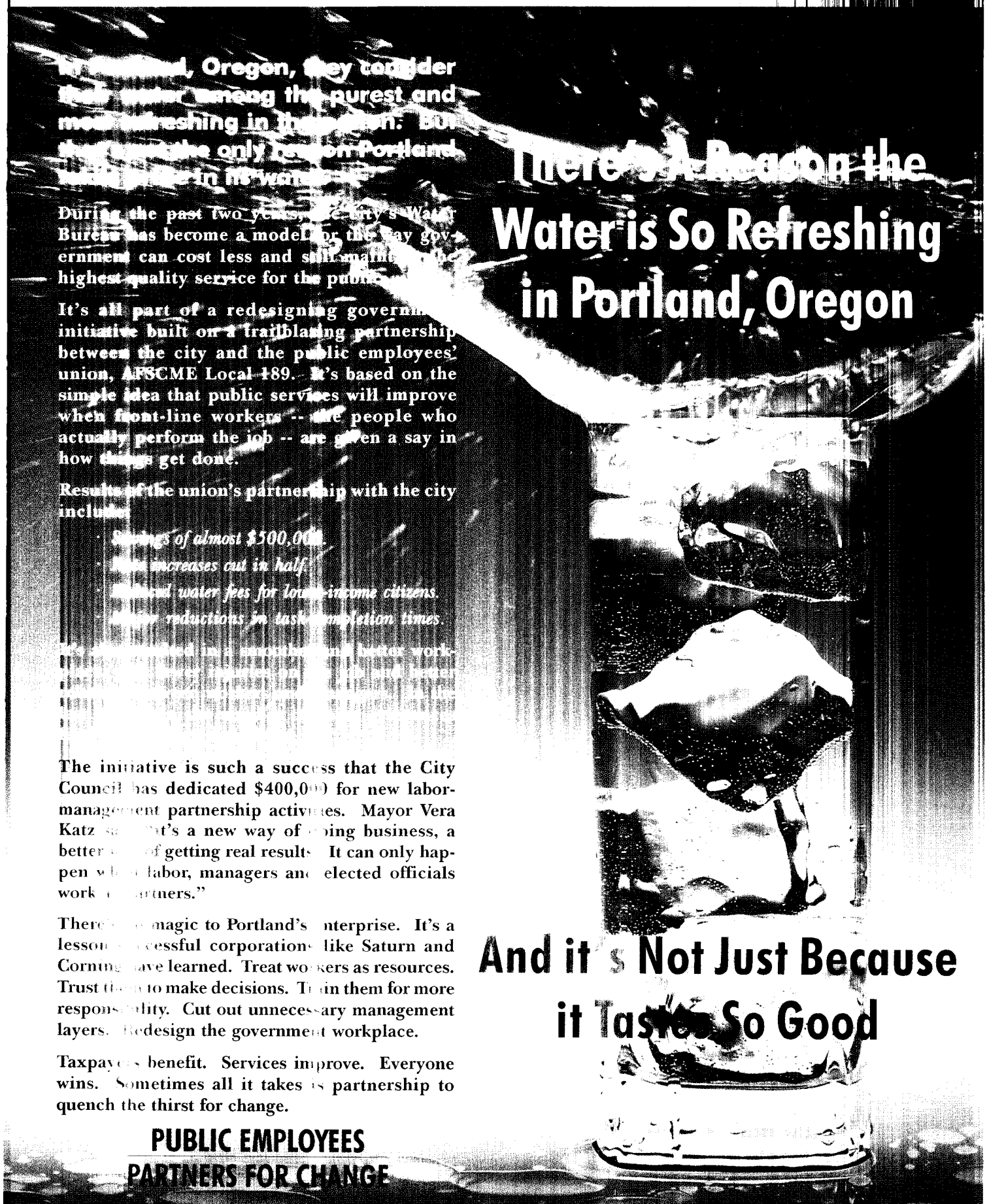
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vulgar. I wondered if I had the courage to say no and realized I didn't. What kind of love can we have? I thought.

I said, "In a little while. Comedy hour is about to start." We sat down on our chairs with the radio between us and listened to Maurya's whiny voice. This week he had gotten involved with criminals who wanted to go to jail to collect the reward on themselves. The canned laughter gusted from several flats. When the music of the racing horses marked the close of the show, I felt hopeful again, and thought Rajinder looked very handsome in his kurta pajamas.

I bathed carefully, pouring mug after mug of cold water over myself until my fingertips were wrinkled and my nipples erect. The candlelight made the bathroom orange and my skin copper. I washed my pubis carefully to make sure no smell remained from urinating. Rubbing myself dry, I became aroused. I wore the red sari again, with a new blouse, and no bra, so that my nipples would show.

I came and stood beside Rajinder, my arm brushing against his kurta sleeve. Every now and then a raindrop fell, and I wondered if I were imagining it. On balconies and roofs all around us I could see the dim figures of men, women, and children waiting for the first rain. "You look pretty," he said. Somewhere Lata Mangeshkar sang with a static-induced huskiness. The street was silent. Even the children were hushed. As the wind picked up, Rajinder said, "Let's close the windows."

The wind coursed along the floor, upsetting newspapers and climbing the walls to swing on curtains. A candle stood on the refrigerator. As I leaned over to pull a window shut, Rajinder pressed against me and cupped my right breast. I felt a shock of desire pass through me. As I walked around the rooms shutting windows, he touched my buttocks, pubis, stomach.

When the last window was closed, I waited for a moment before turning around, because I knew he wanted me to turn around quickly. He pulled me close, with his hands on my buttocks. I took his tongue in my mouth. We kissed like this for a long time.

The rain began falling, and we heard a roar from the people on the roofs nearby. "The clothes," Rajinder said, and pulled away.

We ran out. We could barely see each other. Lightning bursts would illuminate an eye, an arm, some teeth, and then darkness would come again. We jerked the clothes off and let the pins fall to the ground. We deliberately brushed roughly against each other. The raindrops were like thorns, and we began laughing. Rajinder's shirt had wrapped itself around and around the clothesline. Wiping his face, he knocked his glasses off. As I saw him crouch and fumble around helplessly for them, I felt such tenderness that I knew I would never love him as much as I did at that moment. "The wind in the trees," I cried out, "it sounds like the sea."

We slowly wandered back inside, kissing all the while. He entered me like a sigh. He suckled on me and moved back and forth and side to side, and I felt myself growing warm and loose. He sucked on my nipples and held my waist with both hands. We made love gently at first, but as we both neared climax, Rajinder began stabbing me with his penis and I came in waves so strong that I felt myself vanishing. When Rajinder sank on top of me, I kept saying, "I love you. I love you."

"I love you too," he answered. Outside, the rain came in sheets and the thunder was like explosions in caverns.

The candle had gone out while we made love, and Rajinder got up to light it. He drank some water and then lay down beside me. I wanted some water too, but did not want to say anything that would make him feel bad about his thoughtlessness. "I'll be getting promoted soon. Minaji loves me," Rajinder said. I rolled onto my side to look at him. He had his arms folded across his chest. "Yesterday he said, 'Come, Rajinderji, let us go write your confidential report.'" I put my hand on his stomach, and Rajinder said, "Don't," and pushed it away. "I said, 'Oh, I don't know whether that would be good, sir.' He laughed and patted me on the back. What a nincompoop. If it weren't for the quotas, he would never be manager." Rajinder chuckled. "I'll be the youngest bank manager in Delhi." I felt cold and tugged a sheet over our legs. "In college I had a schedule for where I wanted to be by the time I was thirty. By twenty-two I became an officer; soon I'll be a manager. I wanted a car, and we'll have that in a year. I wanted a wife, and I have that."

"You are so smart."

"Some people in college were smarter. But I knew exactly what I wanted. A life is like a house. One has to plan carefully where all the furniture will go."

"Did you plan me as your wife?" I asked, smiling.

"No. I had wanted at least an M. A., and someone who worked, but Mummy didn't approve of a daughter-in-law who worked. I was willing to change my requirements. Because I believe in moderation, I was successful. Everything in its place. And pay for everything. Other people got caught up in love and friendship. I've always felt that these things only became a big deal because of the movies."

"What do you mean? You love me and your mother, don't you?"

"There are so many people in the world that it is hard not to think that there are others you could love more."

Seeing the shock on my face, he quickly added, "Of course I love you. I just try not to be too emotional about it." The candle's shadows on the wall were like the wavery bands formed by light reflected off water. "We might even be able to get a foreign car."

The second time he took me that night, it was from behind. He pressed down heavily on my back and grabbed my breasts.

I woke at four or five. The rain scratched against the windows and a light like blue milk shone along the edges of the door. I was cold and tried to wrap myself in the sheet, but it was not large enough.

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Colette and Truman Capote

by NANCY CALDWELL SOREL

WHEN Truman Capote went to Paris, three years after the war, he was twenty-three but looked sixteen. Thin and waif-like, his dark-blond hair cut in bangs over dreamy blue eyes, he appeared too young to have written the just published best seller *Other Voices, Other Rooms*—a story about loneliness, disappointment, and the perversion of innocence. Its fame had preceded him and attracted the French literati: he had met Camus and Cocteau (who dubbed him "the infant"), and now he arrived at Colette's apartment in the old Palais Royal. At seventy-five, she was unwell but not unwelcoming.

Later Capote wrote that he went looking for answers. Colette had lived so broadly: her early stories were as intemperate as his own, and she had danced naked on the Paris stage and slept with three husbands, a stepson, and a variety of women. Her once lithe young body now lay heavy and solid against the bed pillows. Her lips were "a slippery, shiny, exciting show-girl red," he recalled, and her hair—ankle-length at twenty, later bobbed—was "a kinky spray."

They talked. How they talked remains a mystery, as she spoke little English and he no French. Perhaps her husband, Maurice Goudeket, was there to translate—an intrusion Capote preferred not to dwell on. They talked of her perfume, the same worn by the Empress Eugénie, and by Proust, too—or so Cocteau had told her. She showed him her collection of precious crystal paperweights. "They are more satisfying than jewelry," she said. He must take home the one with the white rose inside—like a favor after a children's party.

The maid brought the tea tray, which she set on the bed among the books and letters and drowsing cats. It was then that Colette got down to business. "Now tell me," she said, pouring, "what you expect from life." Capote was startled. "I don't know what I expect," he admitted. "I know what I'd like. And that is to be a grown-up person." The mere thought caused Colette to raise and lower her painted eyelids "like the slowly beating wings of a great blue eagle." "But that," she said, "is the one thing none of us can ever be."

Illustration by Edward Sorel

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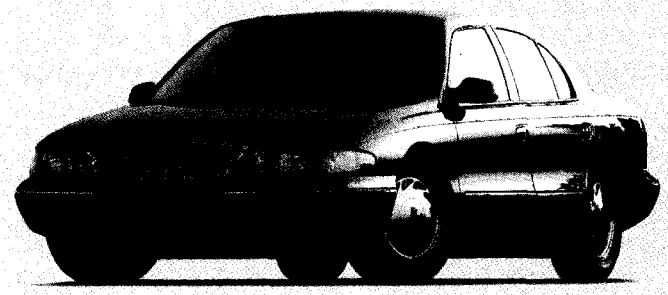

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Too Representative Government

by STEVEN STARK

Why is Congress held in such low esteem? One reason is that as it has become more truly representative, it has tried to solve more and more problems, including many that no one knows how to solve—thus raising expectations and frequently disappointing them. Quick-fix reforms aren't likely to make the public any happier with the legislative branch

"SUPPOSE you were an idiot," Mark Twain wrote during the Gilded Age. "And suppose you were a member of Congress. But I repeat myself." "Do you pray for the senators?" someone asked the chaplain of the Senate in 1903. "No, I look at the senators and pray for the country," he replied.

The more things change, the more they remain the same. The 104th Congress began work in January, and talk of institutional revolution is once again in the air. It's not just that the Republicans—finally in control of both Houses for the first time in four decades—have begun reforming the least popular branch by taking such measures as applying all federal employment laws to Congress, cutting House committee staffs by a third, and requiring a 60 percent majority in the House to approve tax increases. Many critics, such as Kevin Phillips and Lamar Alexander, have discussed a number of rather radical proposals for recasting the institution—everything from term limits to increasing the size of Congress to cutting the length of the session in half to instituting national referenda.

One might argue that some of these changes would make Congress more effective, as would a few of the currently popular (but unlikely to pass) proposals for campaign-finance overhaul and restrictions on lobbying.

A number of scholars, former members of Congress, and other observers suggest, however, that even far-reaching reforms—not to mention the recent election results—are unlikely to quell the public's considerable discontent with Congress for long. In its attempts to lay the blame for that discontent at the feet of the Democrats, the new Republican majority is ignoring a fundamental reality that has come into being over the past generation: owing largely to the changing nature of representation, the expanding role of the federal government, and the influence of television, the public has arrived at new and often contradictory expectations of how

Illustrations by David McLimans

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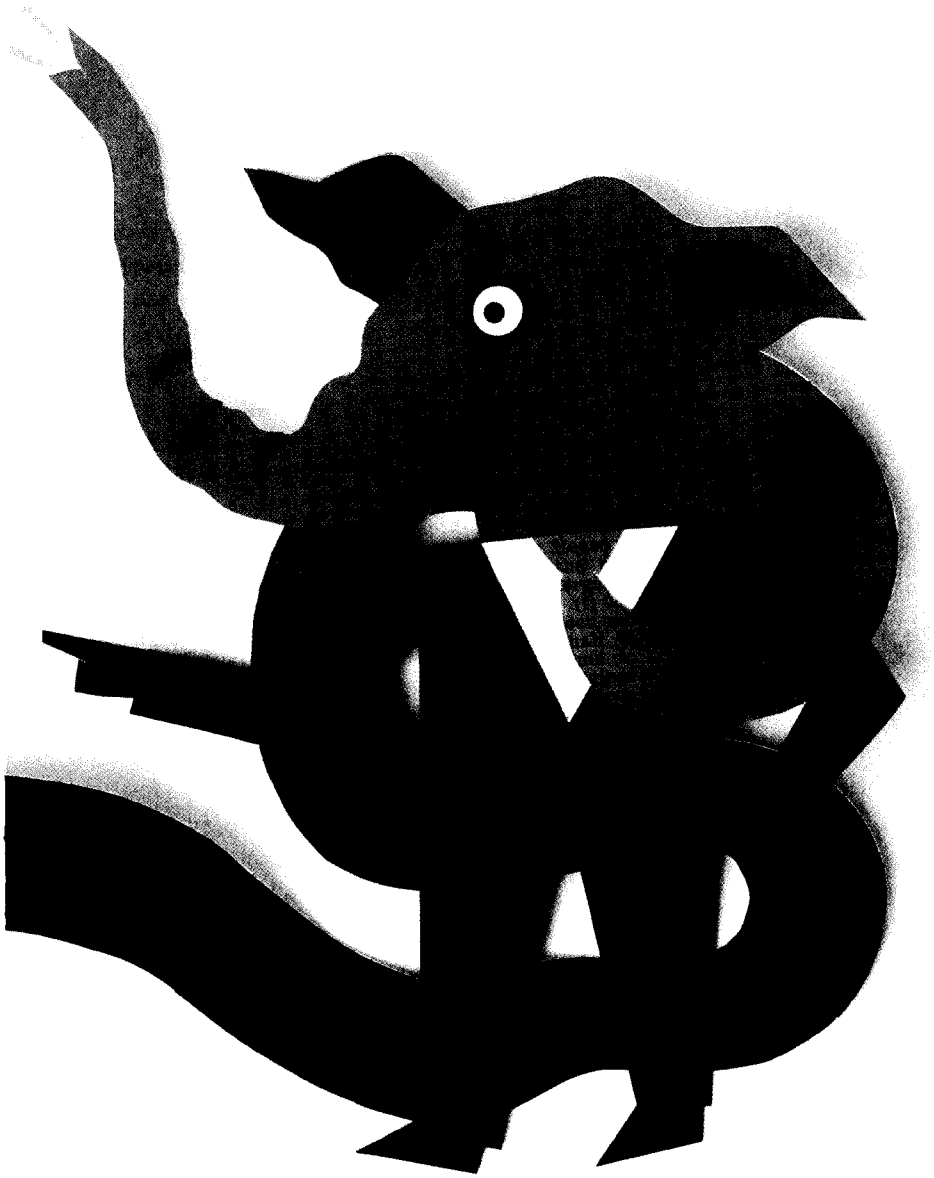
Congress should act and what it should do. Until these contradictions are resolved, Congress is doomed to unpopularity and ineffectiveness, no matter who controls it.

There is, after all, an inevitable tension in any legislative system between deliberation and action, discretion and responsiveness. The job of a legislature is not only to get things done but also to air points of view and ensure the legitimacy of governmental action. These goals often conflict—as do the objectives of representing a constituency while exercising independent judgment, or looking out for both the national and the local interest. Throughout American history the pendulum has swung back and forth as legislators have tried to come to terms with these tensions. Today, however, voters apparently believe that the pendulum can be made to stop. In much the same way as the public seems to want a welfare state without picking up the tab, it wants the advantages of a legislative system without any of the costs.

Even if Congress adopts all the most ambitious reforms, this cannot be achieved. No matter how noble the goal, virtually any reform that seeks to change the makeup of Congress (such as term limits) or encourage debate or make members rely less on staff, so that they will draft their own bills and read those of others, will lead the institution to be even more dependent on special interests or to get less done. Almost any proposal that increases the institution's ability to act quickly, such as eliminating the filibuster or making it easier to "fast track" legislation, will tend to alienate those in the minority and cause some attempts at lawmaking to be less judicious and acceptable to the masses. Attempts to limit the length of the session will inevitably narrow the range of concerns that Congress can tackle. Although many of the current Republican proposals for institutional reform have surface appeal, chances are that they will eventually end up antagonizing at least as many voters as they please. And Congress will end up just as unpopular as it was when the Republicans took over, if not more so.



The Wired Congress

FOR the first four decades of the Republic, congressmen actually spent very little time in Washington. For the next century or so they had little contact with their districts once they were in Washington. (Senators, of course, were not even popularly elected until early in this century.) Theorists from Thomas Hobbes to Edmund Burke had debated the extent to which representatives should directly reflect the desires of their constituents, but that debate took place in a world in which a lot of groups couldn't vote, news was hard to come by, and no one really knew how to measure public opinion other than in an election. The difficulty of travel and the irregularity of mail delivery made communication between constituents and Congress problematic. Thus members inevitably had to exercise independent judgment on most issues, no matter where they stood philosophically on the representation question.

Today things have swung to the opposite extreme, and not just because the infamous lobbyists surround congressmen and senators. Daily polling, E-mail, 800 numbers, and call-in shows have exponentially

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increased the contact that representatives have with their constituents. "Many days I felt like nothing more than the end of a computer terminal," Elliott Levitas, a former representative from Georgia, told me in an interview. The danger today is not that representatives know too little about what the electorate feels but that they know too much. Like body temperature, public opinion can shift hourly without consequence. "The cooling-off process that used to exist isn't there any more," Dennis Eckart, a former representative from Ohio, says. "As a lover of democracy, I can appreciate that, but there was an advantage to having an electorate that couldn't figure out what was in a tax bill." What's more, polls are often misleading—in part because they can be manipulated, and in part because many issues are so complex that the public holds conflicting views of what it wants, and expects its representatives magically to resolve the conflict.

"Ultimately, there's very little clarity to all those poll numbers, even though a lot of analysts attach great significance to them," says Peter Smith, formerly a representative from Vermont and now the founding president of California State University at Monterey Bay. "Health care and welfare reform are abstractions, no matter what a poll says. People favor something in general. When you get down to specifics, however, they often don't." The debate last session over President Bill Clinton's health-care bill illustrated that principle once again.

The rise of constituency politics has also led the public to view legislators simply as instruments of its will. The political scientist David Mayhew, of Yale University, is not alone in having observed that the job of a federal legislator changed dramatically with the rise of New Deal and Great Society programs. Now an increasing number of constituents look to their legislator not only to obtain valuable pork-barrel projects for their state or district but also to help them obtain personal benefits from the government and its bureaucracies.

This development has been exacerbated by the fact that representatives have to serve more constituents today than they did in the past. Sixty-five representatives served four million Americans in the first Congress—a ratio of approximately 1:60,000. Today, with 435 representatives serving a population of more than 260 million, the ratio is approximately 1:600,000. Offices in home states have proliferated, and legislative aides have increasingly been transformed into caseworkers, thereby accounting for a healthy proportion of the increase in the size of those vilified congressional staffs. (The Republican reforms haven't even touched House and Senate personal-staff members, almost 40 percent of whom now work in district or state offices.) It should be no surprise, then, that voters increasingly view their legislators almost as personal therapists—a perspective that hardly encourages representatives to show any independence from the will of their districts, or to act in the national interest when it conflicts with local concerns. If legislators now seem excessively parochial and preoccupied with day-to-day responsiveness, that is what they are hearing the public demand.

TODAY CONGRESS ROUTINELY PASSES LAWS DEALING WITH LOCAL MATTERS—CRIME, HOMELESSNESS, EDUCATION—AND NOBODY EVEN BLINKS AT THE LOSS OF LOCAL CONTROL, ONCE A CORNERSTONE OF OUR PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY. THAT'S A RADICAL TURN IN OUR HISTORY.

While these changes have been occurring, Congress has also been attracting members of a different kind, whether Republican or Democrat. Virtually everyone agrees that today's representatives tend to be far better educated and informed, more professional, and less graft-ridden than their predecessors. Yet many also believe that something is missing from this generation in Congress—even from the new Republicans. "What happened is that as the quality of the legislature went up, its performance went down," says Theodore Lowi, a professor of government at Cornell University. "These people are much more individual entrepreneurs; they have far less respect for party institutions and hierarchy." Or, as the former representative Al Swift, of Washington, puts it, "We'd be better off with four hundred and ten followers and twenty-five leaders than the other way around."

The new entrepreneurial style is blamed in part for the lack of collegiality in Congress and the proliferation of committee and subcommittee assignments on the Hill, which have increased for senators and nearly doubled for representatives since the 1950s. (The number of committees and subcommittees has actually shrunk, owing to reorganizations; the Republican Contract With America has consolidated even more committees.) It also helps account, Lowi says, for the fact

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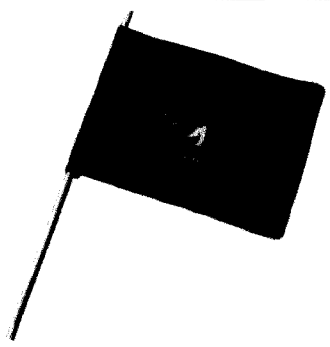

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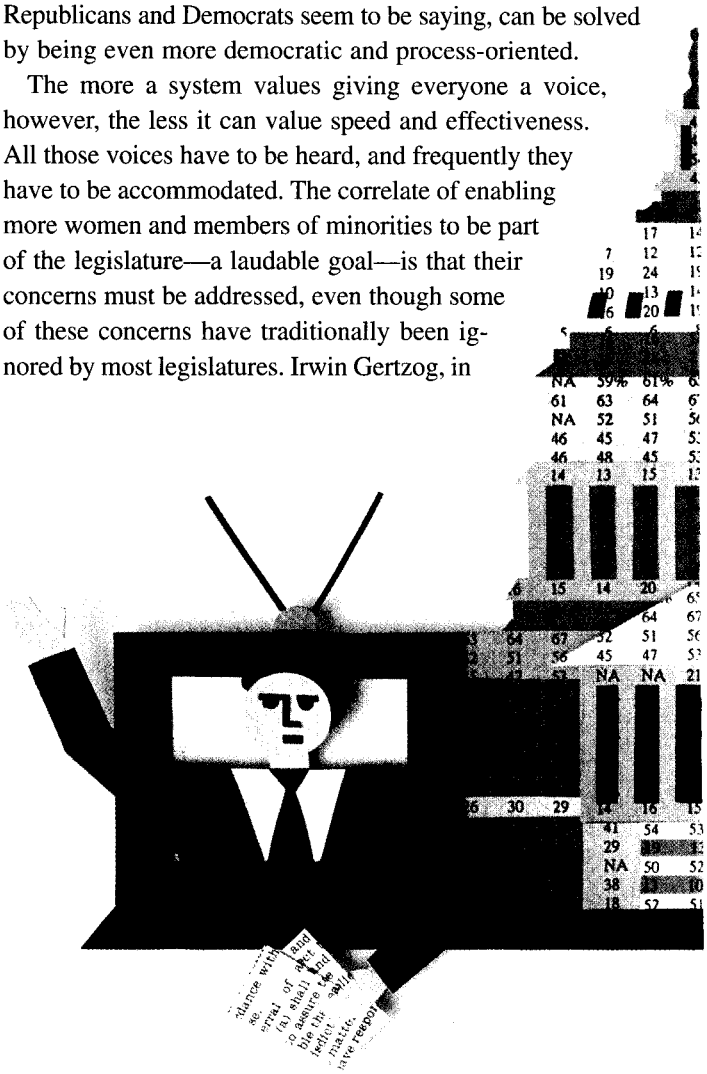
that Congress has become so sensitive to short-term public opinion: "They don't have the party to hide behind anymore. Because they're more individually accountable, they feel much more vulnerable and they react accordingly."

Circular Cures

REVERSING the trend toward a professional class of legislators is the goal of the term-limits movement. Mark Petracca, a political scientist at the University of California at Irvine, has written that legislative professionalization runs counter to the basic values of representative government, because "a profession entails a set of role relationships between 'experts' and 'clients'" which are fundamentally at odds with the way Congress is supposed to work. Yet the desire for a "citizen legislature," embodied in the term-limits movement, may be as quixotic as the search for a doctor who still makes house calls. "Sure, Congress has changed, but so has the country," says Ronald Peters, the director of the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center, at the University of Oklahoma. "Things have become less hierarchical than they once were almost everywhere. Part of this is generational, but a lot of it is just the way we've changed as a people. Legislators are more autonomous, but so is everyone else in the culture. This institution may be more professional, but all disciplines are becoming more professionalized. This is all part of a larger pattern, which in one sense couldn't be more representative."

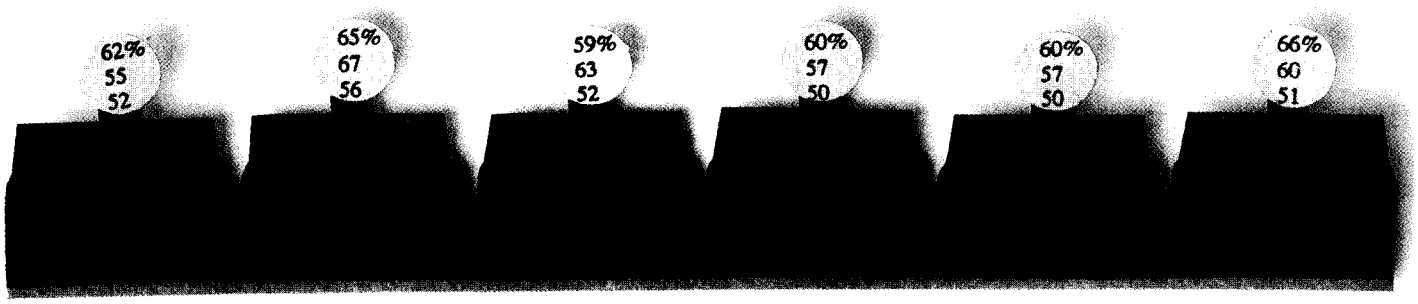
The current cultural preoccupation with inclusion has also had important effects. Opening up the process to everyone—by such means as expansion of voting rights, more primaries and referenda, and encouraging access to government services—could be characterized as the major theme of our politics over the past third of a century, and there's obviously a lot to be said for it. The congressional response to Watergate, for example, often focused on the process of government, not its substance: lawmakers passed "sunshine laws" to force government to be more open and ethical, and in a spasm of reform wiped out many seniority privileges to make Congress more egalitarian. Even today, when complaints about Congress focus on how process reforms have still failed to address the institution's underlying problems, many of the popular ideas about how to change Congress—such as term limits and more referenda—continue to focus on process. The problems caused by being more democratic and process-oriented, both Republicans and Democrats seem to be saying, can be solved by being even more democratic and process-oriented.

The more a system values giving everyone a voice, however, the less it can value speed and effectiveness. All those voices have to be heard, and frequently they have to be accommodated. The correlate of enabling more women and members of minorities to be part of the legislature—a laudable goal—is that their concerns must be addressed, even though some of these concerns have traditionally been ignored by most legislatures. Irwin Gertzog, in



his book *Congressional Women,* finds that women in Congress are far likelier than their male colleagues to stress such issues as the treatment of rape victims, the problems of displaced homemakers, and funding for diagnostic tests for breast cancer. "Congress succeeds much better as a representative body than it used to," says Michael Mezey, a professor of political science at DePaul University, "which means it's probably somewhat less successful as a lawmaking body."

Democratizing the internal rules of Congress has also made it harder to accomplish anything substantive. The more a cul-



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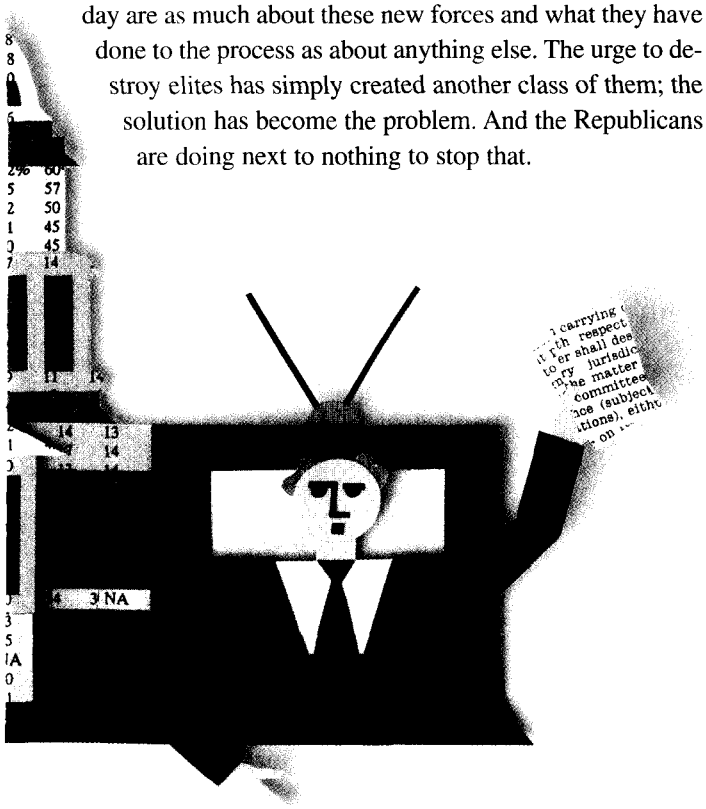
ture moves toward democracy, however, the more it empowers those forces that have the ability to manipulate public opinion or provide access. The rise in the importance of media consultants, the press, and special-interest money is directly proportional to the growth of democracy in the culture and in Congress over the past thirty years. Read the polls or listen to talk radio and you will find that the complaints today are as much about these new forces and what they have done to the process as about anything else. The urge to destroy elites has simply created another class of them; the solution has become the problem. And the Republicans are doing next to nothing to stop that.



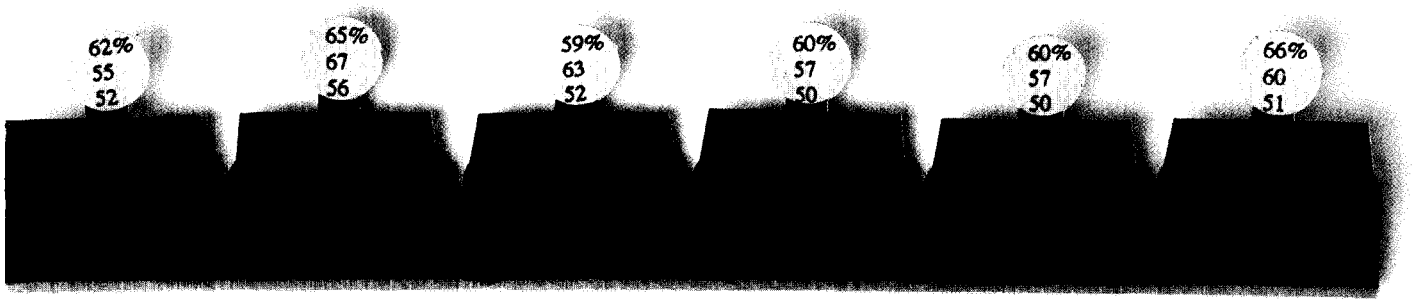
The Buck Stops Nowhere

CONGRESS once tended to pass relatively concrete, simple laws in relatively few areas, which meant that the results of any lawmaking were far easier to assess. For our first 140 years it dealt with economic issues primarily through tariffs and focused on the country's expansion, wars, and treaties. There was little money to spend, and the Constitution had been interpreted as allowing far less federal intrusion into the workings of the states than we know today. "Nineteenth-century Congresses actually worked better," Theodore Lowi says. "They just passed very limited, piecemeal laws." At the turn of the century the House had no staff members and the Senate only a few. (By 1991 the personal staffs of the two houses together numbered more than 11,000, and nearly another 3,500 people worked for the committees.)

The passage of a federal income tax early in this century was the first step toward the creation of the welfare state. Still, the concept of dealing with complicated economic and social-welfare problems on a systematic national basis really arose during the crisis presented by the Great Depression and then the Second World War. Congress's response in the 1930s and the three decades that followed was to cede to the executive branch (which had drafted most of the laws in the first place) the authority to solve most of these problems—and the creation of administrative agencies, along with the enlargement of administrators' responsibilities, was often part of the solution. The idea was that many problems were too complex or technical for a legislature and that a specialized agency such as the Federal Communications Commission, or an administrator such as the Secretary of Agriculture, could do a better job of solving them. These agencies were also created in an era when there was much intellectual support for the notion that decisions should be taken away from legislatures and given to experts, who knew better.

The typical congressional grant of authority to do this was quite brief, simple, and vague: "[to regulate] interstate and foreign commerce in communication by wire and radio"; to make agricultural marketing "orderly." In theory, Congress would strictly oversee the agency's performance. In reality, representatives were usually happy to pass the buck to someone else and leave the agency alone, except when they needed a favor. As it happened, legislators soon discovered that such a setup also allowed them to claim credit for a program and then, if things went awry, "run against the bureaucracy"—a bureaucracy they had created, to avoid having to deal with problems themselves. The buck stopped nowhere.

The Supreme Court put a stop to elements of Roosevelt's New Deal, on the grounds that the Constitution simply did not allow the federal government to act in many areas. Support for a further expansion of federal power, however, took hold in the public imagination in the 1950s and 1960s, with



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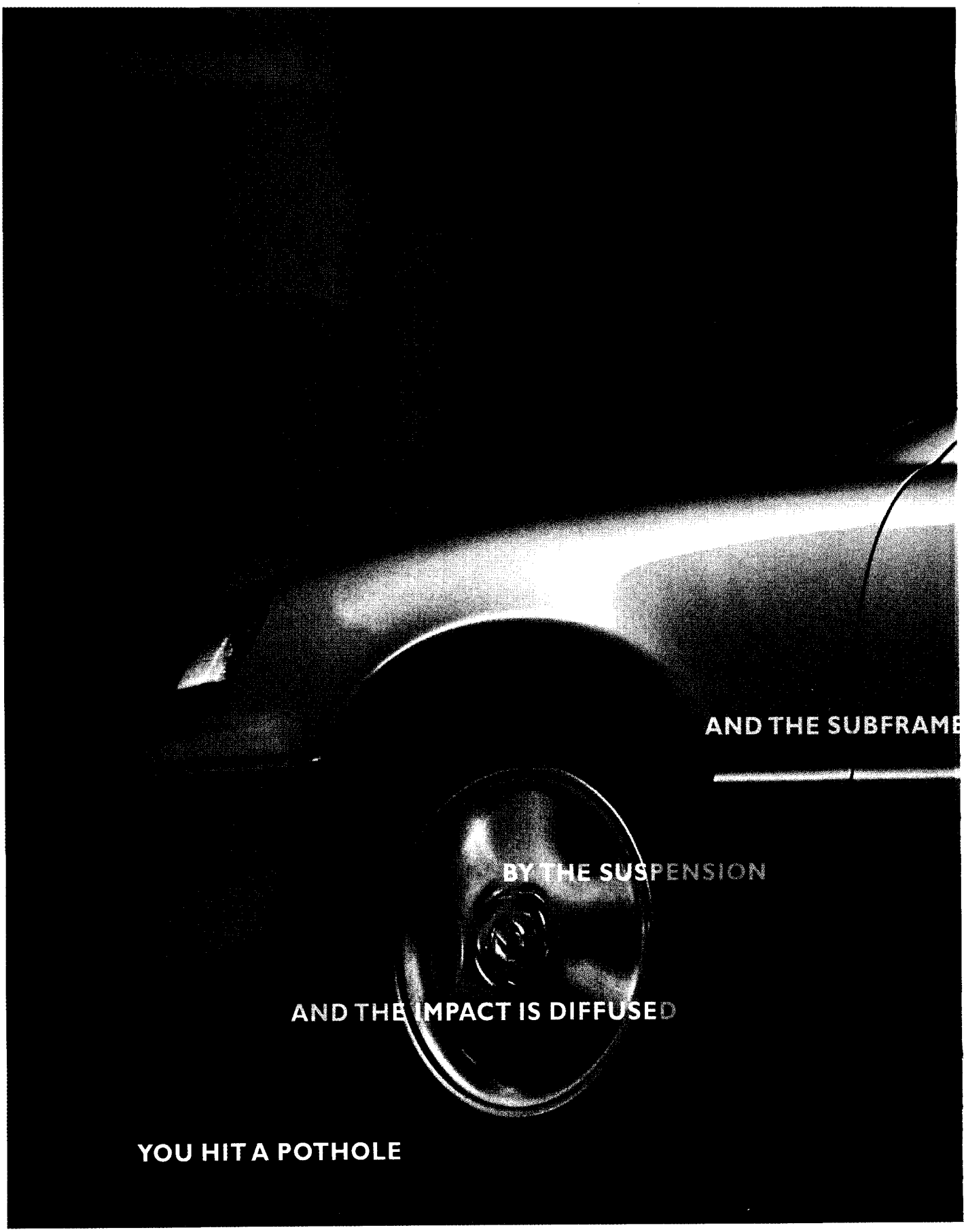

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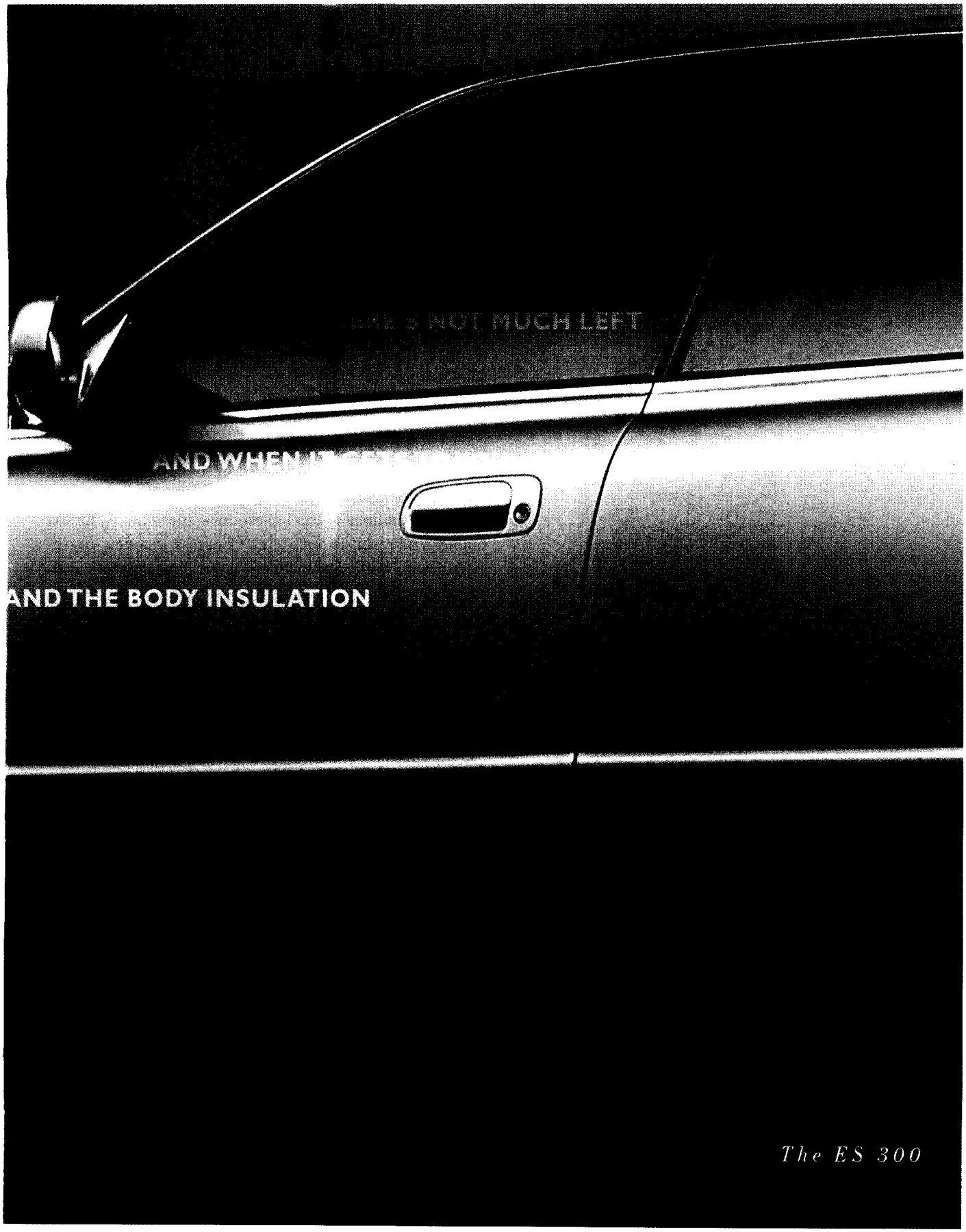

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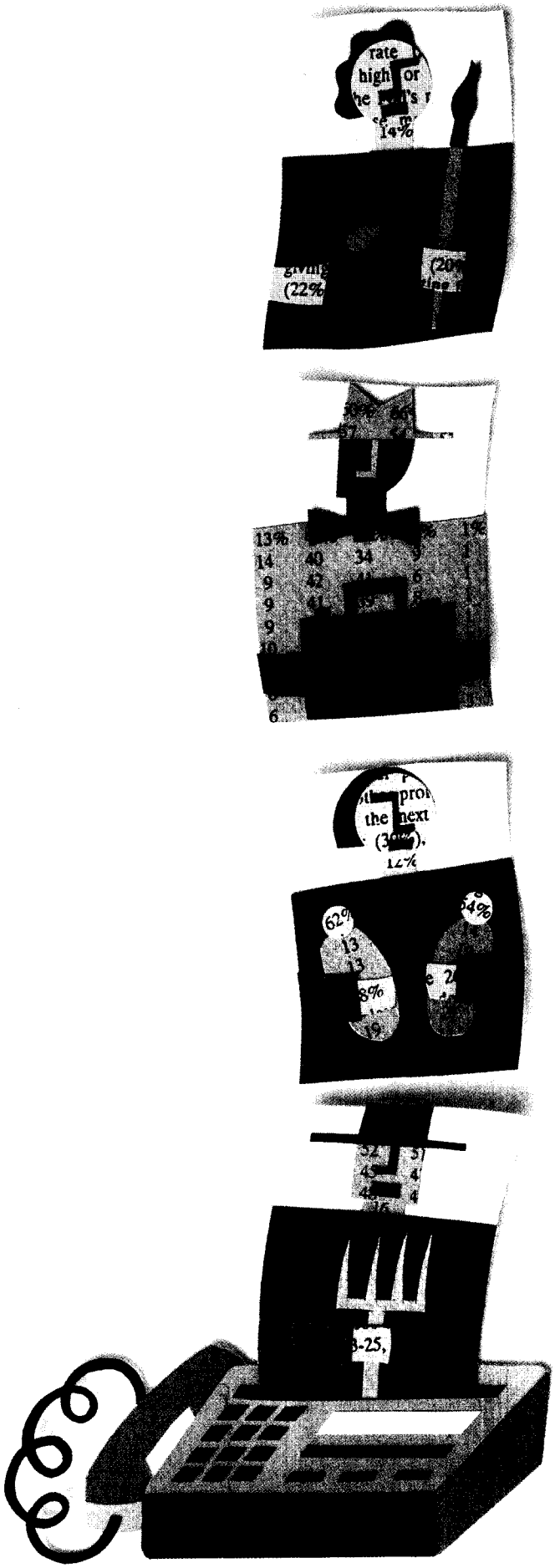

the civil-rights revolution, which ended up discrediting intellectual and legal arguments about "states' rights." Nelson Polsby, an expert on Congress and a professor of political science at the University of California at Berkeley, says, "It became an article of faith among liberals that you can't trust Mississippi, so you have to nationalize these things."

60,000 Pages

FOR Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs, in the mid-sixties, Congress was still using the New Deal agency as a model—with important differences. First, the traditional division between federal and state authority having been obliterated, Congress began moving into substantive areas, such as crime and housing, that had traditionally been beyond the purview of the federal government except in extreme emergencies. The early civil-rights laws were working, after all, and many of the nation's problems seemed rooted in its troubled racial past; a federal takeover seemed justified. Once involved in those areas, however, Congress kept expanding its grasp, eventually dictating to states on traditionally local questions—speed limits, for example. The result is that today Congress routinely passes laws dealing with local matters—crime, homelessness, education—and nobody even blinks at the loss of local control, which was once a cornerstone of our Jeffersonian public philosophy. As the former representative Al Swift puts it, "We've kind of blurred the distinction between a county sheriff and a congressman."

That's a recent and radical turn in our history, and one—"devolution" rhetoric to the contrary—that the Republicans show little sign of undoing. It is not simply that Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich may be misreading last year's election returns when he maintains that the public agrees it is time to dismantle much of the Great Society, or return programs to the states. The Contract With America, for example, promised a tougher anti-crime package, "strengthening rights of parents in their children's education," stronger child-pornography laws, and new rules to reform the welfare system, tort law, and product liability—efforts in many areas beyond what was seen as the purview of Congress when the Republicans last held both houses.

The 1960s blizzard of legislation came during an era when belief in the possibilities of governmental power may have been at a peak. In the 1965–1966 session alone nearly 20,000 bills were introduced. (The number in recent years has averaged fewer than 10,000 a session.) "If we can put a man on the moon, we can [fill in the blank]" seemed to characterize almost every politician's stump speech. Every problem, it seemed, had an effective legislative solution. Alan Ehrenhalt, the author of *The United States of Ambition*, finds that legislators of both parties still hold this belief. "Legislators are used to solving problems," he says. "Government tends to attract people who think government

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can solve problems. But once you get into things like crime, welfare, and education, you're trying to change human behavior, and that's much tougher to do. The New Deal was small potatoes compared to most of this stuff."

"Several things happen when the government gets into these areas," says James Q. Wilson, a professor of management and public policy at the University of California at Los Angeles. "First, no one really knows how to solve these problems. Second, the public itself is deeply conflicted about most of these issues; you rarely have a consensus from which to act. Third, these issues tend to be so complex that they overwhelm the process. And finally, when these measures fail to do much to solve something like crime—which is what inevitably happens—they greatly reinforce the general disillusionment with government. There's something to be said for sticking with what you know how to do."

During that legislative blizzard Congress was no longer just distributing money or dealing with problems in discrete areas (how to regulate the airwaves, or how to provide a supplemental income to senior citizens), and the grand problems it confronted, like poverty and crime, seemed to require a variety of coordinated strategies. "That was a key mistake," Theodore Lowi says. "Health and welfare are not holistic things; they're a collection of problems. The bills collapse of their own weight." Such bills also tend to be so elaborate that voters have difficulty understanding them—which means, at a minimum, that opponents have an easy time raising fears about them. Unsurprisingly, the public becomes more engaged when Congress is debating a seemingly straightforward issue like the Gulf War, in which voters can understand what is at stake.

Nonetheless, over time congressmen on both sides of the aisle began drafting longer, more comprehensive bills; the number of pages of law entered into the statute books during the relatively uneventful 1991–1992 session was two and a half times the number entered by the 1965–1966 Great Society Congress. With many legislators continually preoccupied by issues of openness and equal availability of services, access and due process became legislative focuses. That translated into greatly increased complexity and bureaucracy, not to mention a drain on the courts as litigants attempted to enforce their new rights. In 1936 there were 2,355 pages of regulations amplifying federal laws published in the Federal Register. By 1969 the number had risen to 20,464 pages; in the 1990s the register has been averaging about 60,000 pages a year.

No Amendments Wanted

TRYING to solve a national megaproblem with one huge bill is still an American obsession, as the recent health-care debate showed. Still, by the late 1960s the old model of legislating had begun to fall out of favor, at least in one respect. The criticism, advanced by Ralph Nader and others, was that administrative agencies such as the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Federal Communications Commission inevitably became controlled by the forces they were supposed to regulate. Moreover, distrust of authority was expanding along with voting rights, and there was a corresponding lack of trust in the opinions of experts vis-à-vis "the people." As David Schoenbrod, a professor at New York Law School, has related in *Power Without Responsibility* (1993), what followed was a series of congressional statutes (beginning with the Clean Air Act, in 1970), passed with bipartisan support, that started to abandon the concept of open-ended delegation to independent agencies. Instead these laws essentially ordered the agency in question to take action and gave "elaborate instructions about the goals that it should achieve and the procedures for promulgating them." These instructions often placed administrative obligations on the states, while Congress took credit for the benefits of the legislation.

As a result of this legislative model statutes not only became lengthier and more complicated but also began running up hidden costs, while parochial and elite interests inevitably asserted their influence with help from both sides of the aisle: it was Alaska's Republican senator Ted Stevens, after all,

ALTHOUGH MANY OF THE REPUBLICAN PROPOSALS FOR INSTITUTIONAL REFORM HAVE SURFACE APPEAL, CHANCES ARE THAT THEY WILL EVENTUALLY END UP ANTAGONIZING AT LEAST AS MANY VOTERS AS THEY PLEASE. CONGRESS WILL BE AS UNPOPULAR AS EVER.

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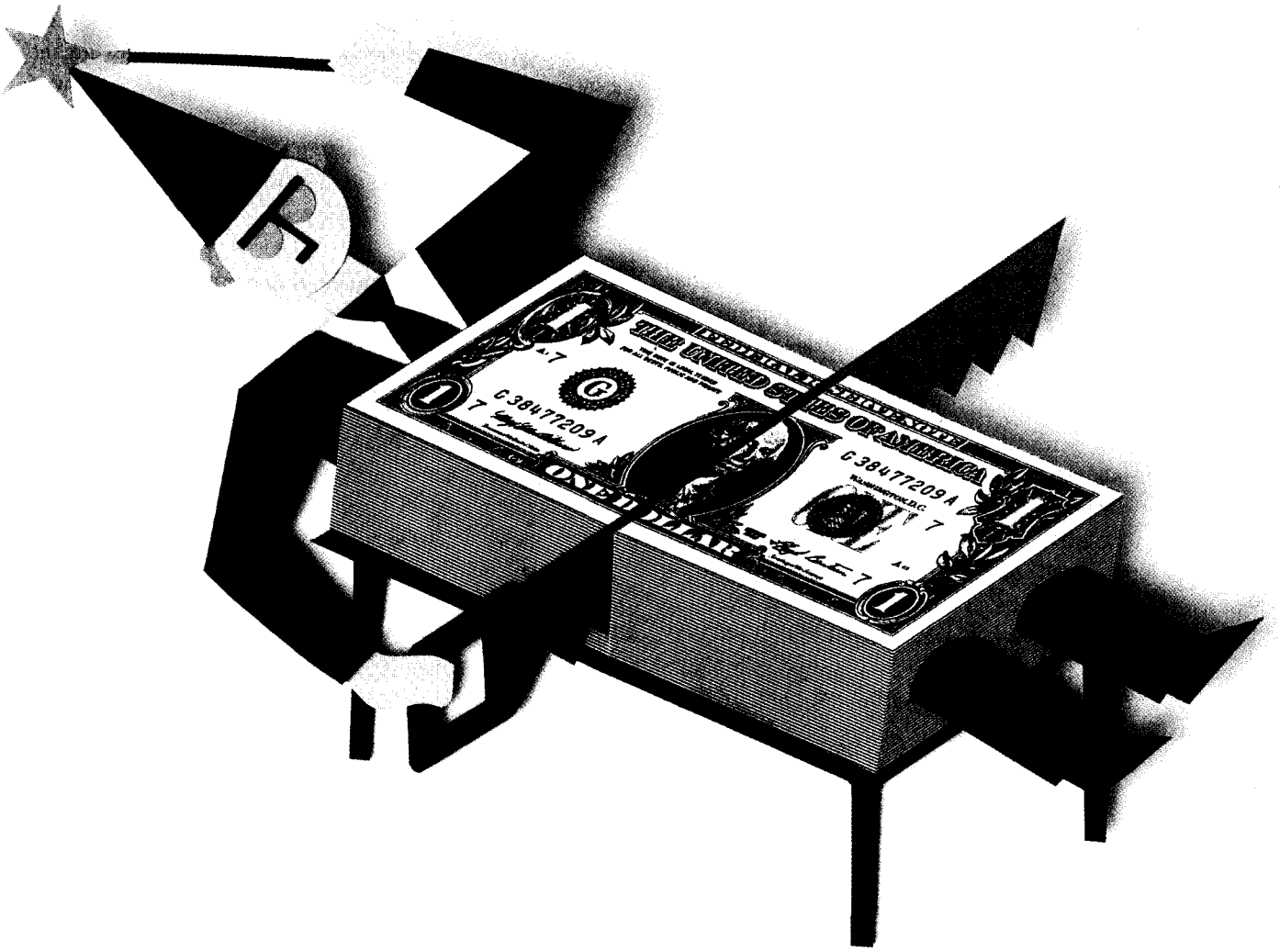

who got grant money for Alaska to try to convert the aurora borealis into electricity. (As Congress-watchers point out, by the past session Congress was appropriating money for a University of Georgia study of city pests, ordering the Department of Health and Human Services to hire "six medium sedans" for transport, and adding what amounted to a gang-rehabilitation program to a flood-relief bill.) And over time Congress confronted many scientific or technical questions—such as how to clean the air—that were far beyond the expertise of most congressmen. So legislators of both parties hired more staff members to deal with these questions, and stopped reading much of their own legislation. Because members needed to rely on experts to draft these extensive and specific statutes, they also became increasingly reliant on "special interests"—if not to write the bills, then at least to tell them what the bills said before a vote. Cutting committee staff, as the Republicans have done, will hardly solve this problem, particularly for newer members, who tend to know less about technical problems than their more experienced colleagues.

The effect of an interstate-highway-building program or a Voting Rights Act—two legislative success stories from the 1950s and 1960s—can be assessed fairly easily. But, as Bruce Ackerman and Susan Rose-Ackerman, professors at Yale Law School, ask in *The Uncertain Search for Environmental Quality*, how does a deliberative body measure precisely the relationship between clean water and public health, let alone determine whether clean water could be had more cheaply by another method? What's more, even if a given approach makes sense now, things change over time. Once a bill gains a constituency—and all those that are enacted do, if only for economic reasons—it becomes very difficult to shift course.

The result has been a proliferation of vague or increasingly unworkable laws that judges cannot revise under current theories of statutory interpretation. (The same is not true of the common law.) These laws can also bankrupt the country, as the laws become ever more complex and costs mount. The Clean Air Act of 1970, complex as it was, filled forty-seven pages in the United States Code. The revision twenty years later filled more than 200 in the denser Congressional Record.

Having so many more constituents and areas of responsibility than it had in the past has also stymied Congress and shifted the way it operates. Besides muscling its way into areas once left to the states, Congress has spent an increasing amount of time over the past two decades on budgetary matters: the number of roll calls on budget questions

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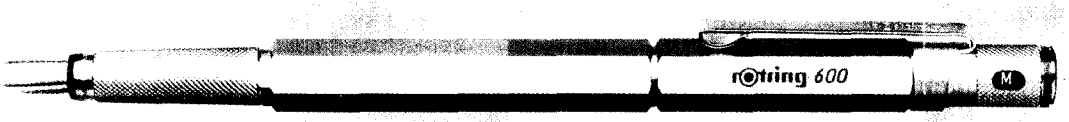

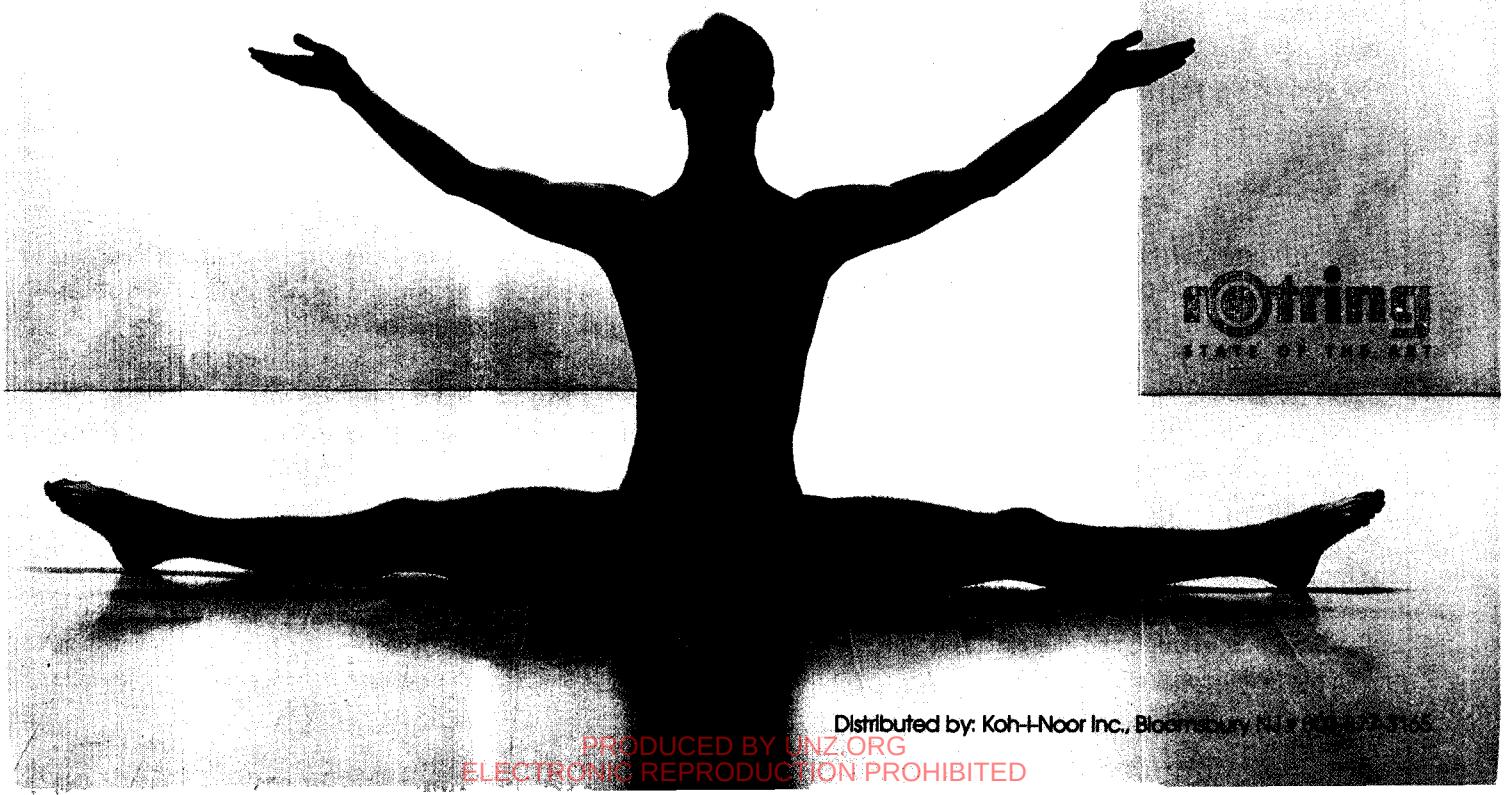

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in the House was almost six times as great in 1991 as it was in 1955—yet another trend that seems unlikely to change with Republican control. "The change in work load has affected the way Congress acts, which in turn has affected public perceptions," says Bruce I. Oppenheimer, a professor of political science at Vanderbilt University, who studies Congress. "In a time-constrained environment the opposition gains power. The filibuster wasn't used much before 1970, because it wasn't a very effective weapon. Who cared if you wasted time? Congress never ran out of time." In a legislative world where time is scarce, democratic values also tend to collapse and mistakes to become more common. One of the purposes of deliberation, after all, is to achieve consensus and avoid error. Tellingly, bills for many of the major legislative achievements of the past sixty years, though contentious, ended up passing with large majorities. For example, the Social Security Act passed in 1935 with seventy-seven votes in the Senate; the Civil Rights Act in 1964 won seventy-three.

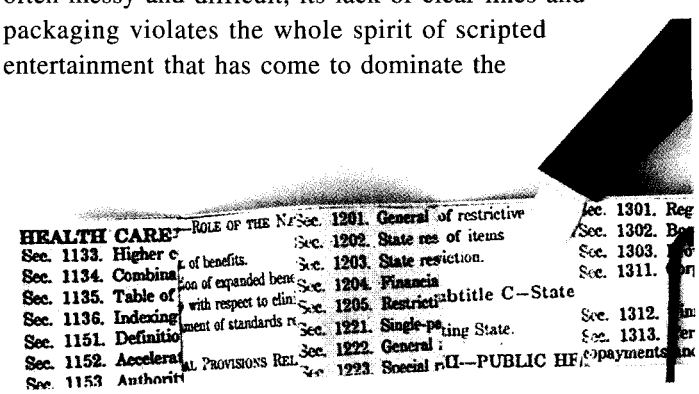
Yet one of the distinguishing characteristics of recent sessions, particularly in the House, is that what little deliberation did once occur has been virtually eliminated. That, in turn, has increased partisanship. In recent years a bill has had about half the chance of passage that it had fifty years ago. In part to speed things up—which is, after all, what the public says it wants—bills introduced on the floor increasingly restrict amendments. Although the Republicans have promised to address that, so far there has been no significant change. Debates now typically take place with no one listening in the chamber, as anyone who has ever watched C-SPAN knows. Even the much-praised Senate and House exchanges before passage of the Gulf War resolution, in January of 1991, consisted primarily of members' rising to deliver prepared speeches to a body in which virtually every mind was already made up. And this year? The Republicans have added many new wrinkles to Congress, but careful deliberation does not appear to be among them.

The Camera and Congress

A DIFFERENT kind of congressional persona tends to flourish in the television age. Fifteen years ago Michael J. Robinson, a professor at Catholic University, wrote, "The increasingly greater reliance on the media for nomination, election, status in the Congress, and reelection is one sign of a new congressional character—one more dynamic, egocentric, immoderate, and, perhaps, intemperate." These telegenic figures, according to one source Robinson cited, were often more concerned with getting on television than with legislative mechanics—yet another reason for the lack of consensus, the emphasis on the illusion of results, and the expansion of staff to deal with the institution's real missions.

Because of its inherent biases, television has also subtly altered the way the public perceives Congress. C-SPAN, of course, has opened up the daily workings of Congress, but its effect is quite limited. C-SPAN's typical audience is minuscule compared with the audience that receives news about Congress from the major networks—which have greatly influenced the way print sources cover Congress.

The communications theorist Ernest Bormann once wrote that "television news coverage is, in many respects, an exercise in creative dramatics in which a cast of familiar characters assembles . . . and improvises a drama according to a stock scenario depending on the news event." By now the scenario involving Congress is very familiar. Because television is drawn to strong characters, it elevates the importance of the President and the speaker of the House vis-à-vis the institution of Congress. Because the medium is drawn to conflict, it denigrates the value of compromise, upon which legislatures depend, and plays up scandal or contentiousness. A recent study by S. Robert Lichter and Daniel R. Amundson, of the Center for Media and Public Affairs, has found that from 1972 to 1992 the proportion of network news stories concerning ethical lapses in Congress more than quadrupled, and the proportion of those portraying conflict between members nearly tripled from 1987 to 1992 (though, to be fair, conflict is up). Television is wedded to the dramatic gesture, and legislative bodies when legislating rarely act in a theatrical fashion. What's more, the legislative process is often messy and difficult; its lack of clear lines and packaging violates the whole spirit of scripted entertainment that has come to dominate the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culture. The workings of Congress are complex and thus time-consuming to explain, and time is something that network television apparently cannot afford.

Changing the voters as much as the candidates, television creates a passive audience of viewer-voters who demand instant gratification and no loose ends. In a world where advertisers constantly proclaim, "You can have it all!" and "Just Do It!" voters have come to see government institutions as ones that should provide it all and just do it, Ross Perot–style. Commercial television also offers an implicit vision of the world in which it's not community or belief in an abiding principle that offers happiness but the acquisition of goods. No wonder, then, that as television became pervasive and the postwar consumer

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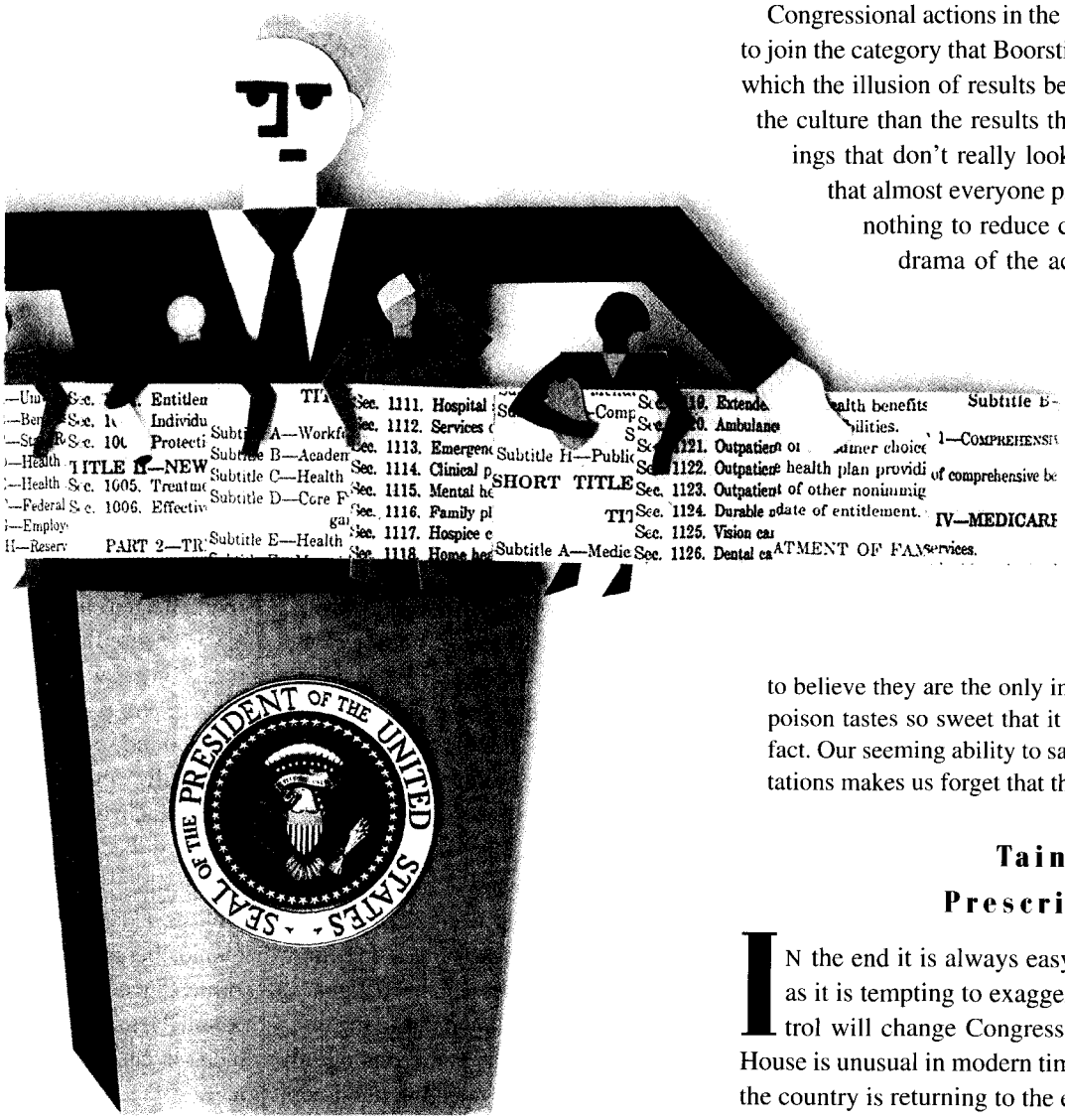
culture took root, voters came increasingly to view the purpose of Congress—if not of government—as guaranteeing their right to that happiness.

With Congress thus increasingly frustrated in its primary responsibility to develop and pass good laws, its members have turned to other tasks, many of them nurtured by television. Here, too, the Republicans have been no different from the Democrats. The memorable moments of the past three decades in Congress have naturally tended to come in front of the cameras—from the McCarthy hearings to Watergate to the Anita Hill–Clarence Thomas confrontation. Congress has been conducting investigations since the 1790s. Yet it is undeniable that congressional investigations have flourished in the television age, thereby appropriating more of Congress's time and attention. Unlike the typical lawmaking process, these hearings offer the broadcast media drama and compelling characters in a stately scene. And, as Daniel Boorstin pointed out nearly thirty-five years ago, in his book *The Image*, the real purpose of hearings is often difficult to discern. "In many cases," Boorstin wrote, "these committees have virtually no legislative impulse, and sometimes no intelligible legislative assignment."

And there is the confirmation process—another area that consumes increasing amounts of the Senate's energy, if only because the number of posts that require confirmation has risen from 149 to 310 since 1960. Confirmation fights are also part of our history, but dramatic confirmation *hearings* are mostly a media-age phenomenon. Here, too, the consensus is that the cameras have contorted the process into great TV drama but something of a well-documented travesty. In foreign policy, a stage that Presidents have long dominated, Congress has tried to share the television spotlight in recent decades, with the same mixed results and a commensurate loss of time to spend in other areas. In *War and Responsibility* (1993) the Stanford University law professor John Hart Ely argues that while Congress has appeared to try to take more responsibility for military action in recent decades, it has in fact happily abdicated to the President most of its powers in this area. This has allowed many members to claim credit when military ventures go well, but to hold accusatory hearings and press conferences before the cameras when they don't.

Congressional actions in the television age have thus come to join the category that Boorstin called "pseudo-events"—in which the illusion of results becomes far more significant in the culture than the results themselves. In legislative hearings that don't really look at legislation, in crime bills that almost everyone privately admits will do next to nothing to reduce crime, the appearance and the drama of the action overshadow the importance of the action itself. Pseudo-events, Boorstin said, are usually more interesting than real actions, and they therefore seem more compelling and often more real. He wrote,

> Once we have tasted the charm of pseudo-events, we are tempted to believe they are the only important events. . . . And the poison tastes so sweet that it spoils our appetite for plain fact. Our seeming ability to satisfy our exaggerated expectations makes us forget that they are exaggerated.



Tainted Prescriptions

IN the end it is always easy to romanticize the past, just as it is tempting to exaggerate how much a shift in control will change Congress. A fifty-two-seat shift in the House is unusual in modern times, but it may mean only that the country is returning to the electoral patterns of a century

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ago, when party control of Congress often shifted back and forth by large margins, while the body drew its share of criticism. "There was no golden age of legislation," says the Yale political scientist David Mayhew.

Agreement is almost universal that Congress could take a number of steps both to purge itself of the effects of special-interest money and to make the legislative process operate more efficiently. After last November there is a perception of hope that the new majority will at least try to do the latter. (The Republican Party has never been enthusiastic about campaign-finance or lobbying reform.) But the Republicans, while in some ways addressing the expanding role of the federal government, appear only slightly more aware than the Democrats before them of the real polarities of sentiment that will have to be addressed before Congress can truly be reformed.

Few of the proposed structural reforms, moreover, would have the effect their proponents suggest. The notion, for example, that a national referendum would be any less susceptible than the legislative process to special-interest influence is ludicrous; and studies on term limits suggest that imposing a twelve-year limit would increase the mean turnover rate in the House by all of one percent per election (though it might, for better or worse, change the type of person elected to Congress). Sending Congress home for six months a year, or cutting down on staff, means that legislators would do less, more slowly; eliminating the filibuster and instituting referenda would be designed to get more or different laws on the books more quickly.

These reforms would not solve "the problem" with Congress, because voters and their representatives are terribly confused about what that is. Voters say they want less government at lower cost, but they apparently want it to do much of what it now does—or more. Polls tell us that among the major complaints about Congress are that it doesn't represent the voters well enough and that it becomes gridlocked—failing to solve the nation's lingering problems, such as health care and welfare reform. Yet over the past two generations Congress has become far more representative and responsive than it used to be, and it now addresses issues that previous legislatures never dreamed of. Nevertheless, as public disillusionment increases, the impulse has been to become even more closely tied to public opinion and to find new legislative ways of attacking megaproblems more quickly and efficiently. The Republicans don't propose to turn all of crime control or tort-law reform over to the states; they propose to enact many of the sweeping reforms themselves, and do it better and faster than the Democrats. So the demands and the contradictions spiral on, out of control. The solutions are manifestations of the problem.

Ironically, what Congress may need is not more democracy but less, and the will to address not bigger problems faster but smaller ones in more-measured ways. Admittedly, much of the civil-rights legislation of the 1960s changed the country profoundly for the better, and subsequent efforts toward greater democracy and openness were implemented in good faith. Now it is time to declare these efforts a success—we have democratized the process!—and move on to developing a public philosophy to address some of the problems we have acquired from encouraging access to national government.

In the populist rush to extend the spirit of democracy that, as Alexis de Tocqueville reminded us 150 years ago, is part of the American character, today's voters and leaders often forget that this is, in the end, a republic. The founders feared the power of the mob and provided distance between the rulers and the ruled, so that our representatives could deliberate much like a jury and exercise collective judgment and even wisdom. Their job, in the words of *The Federalist Papers*, was to "refine and enlarge" the popular will. It is a hierarchical relationship; they are entrusted with power. No parents or teachers worth their salt poll their children or pupils constantly and then give in at the first sign of discontent—just as no legislators in their right minds would cut taxes while keeping government benefits the same. Yet that's what pure representation will do for us a lot of the time. Paradoxically, giving legislators the freedom to forget about public opinion once in a while would do much to restore the voters' faith in the integrity of their representatives. Similarly, few would quarrel with the success of much of the New Deal—and even some of the Great Society—and many of our problems do require national solutions. But they don't necessarily demand complicated, comprehensive solutions.

"If I could get legislators to do just one thing, it would be to take a political Hippocratic oath," the author Alan Ehrenhalt says. "First, do no harm. Just attack things you can do something about." Theodore Lowi concurs. "Congress should narrow its agenda to a few things it knows how to do," he says. "And it should quit writing these large bills which pretend to address a problem but really don't, and create unforeseen problems in their wake."

Those steps alone, it seems, would require a shift in sentiment, in both parties and in the nation at large, not simply because they might mean the passage of fewer complicated entitlement programs for the middle class, but also because they would spell the end of the notion that there can somehow be a risk-free society with a government solution to every problem. The public and the press would also be required to reevaluate whether a buzz of legislative activity really constitutes a "golden age," and whether gridlock—which often means doing nothing because nothing can be done or because we don't know what to do—is always such a terrible thing. Yet such a change would even benefit liberalism. Congress would do less, but might well do better what it did, thereby increasing confidence in the national government generally. And the body might then have the will, occasionally, to act in the national interest by expanding government, even if that meant temporarily rejecting public opinion.

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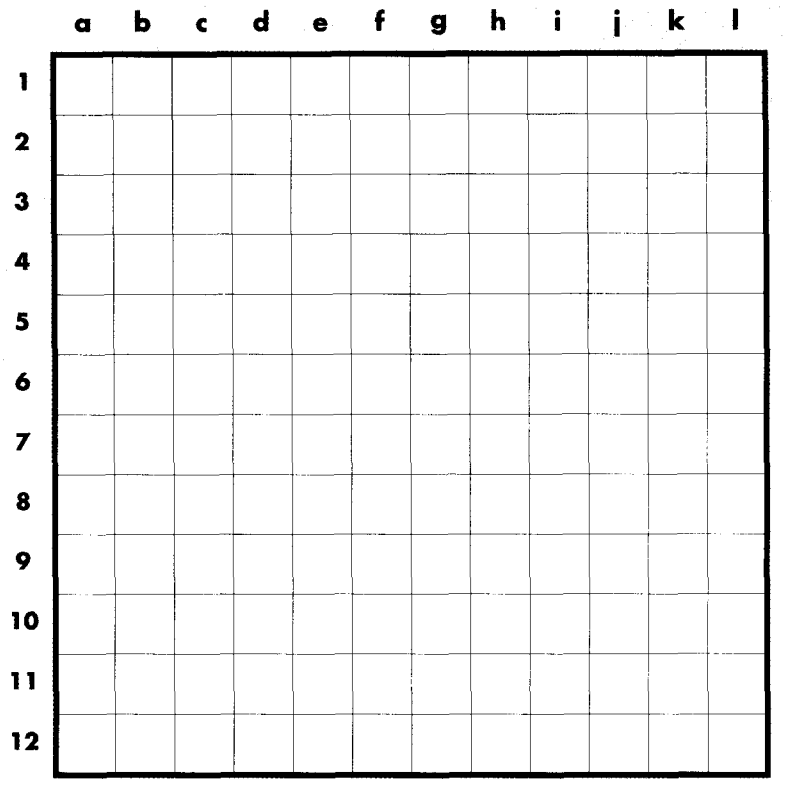
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Asteroids

You are the navigator of the starship *Atlantic*, approaching a treacherous region of space known to be full of irregularly scattered asteroids. To chart the region with your Asteroid Detector, you have sent out Across probes (1-12) and Down probes (a-l), which you must display on your screen (the diagram at right). Each probe consists of one or two words clued in order. Wherever an Across probe fails to intersect with a Down probe, there must be an asteroid. This should be represented on your screen as a black square. A probe may be interrupted by any number of asteroids and in any place. Happy mapping!
Clues are normal (if spacy), and their answers include eight capitalized words.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 123. The winner of the April Puzzler contest will be announced in the June issue.



Across

1. Asteroid in wandering isn't absolutely straight?
2. Mariner One, distant in space, apprehended by observer
3. Extraterrestrial broadcasting school
   Back half of moon framed by keen associate
4. Chance for new haircut in Aries
   Part of an airship Sagan left unfinished
5. *Enterprise*'s new mix?
6. Except for second rock asteroid belt wiped out
7. UFO's pilot controlled our group's planet
   Outfits for forces felt by accelerating astronauts
8. At first, Spock, Uhura, "Bones" mingled in the bow
9. Midmost of asteroids skirted by wise officer?
   Sun Mother—a sacred figure to Hindus
10. Make up a story: "Captured by an Outer-Space Creature"
    O. S. Card's *Missing Ender* getting prize
11. Atom League's travel stop
12. Construction piece for front of space laboratory
    Storm in Bajoran territory

Down

a. Important binary star of Canis Major, reportedly
   Ship carrying American missiles
b. Port for ships wrecked in U-blast
c. Gas nebula's origin, before a billion years
   Path of red in comet's wake
d. 186,000 mi/sec, Aldebaran scattered lights?
e. Minor feature of Saturn covered by element #26
f. Uniform for unit's leader amid swarming comets
   Head of NASA, or bureau's chiefs
g. LEM, per order, carries VIP
h. Speedsters run into first of rocket pilots
   Broadcast area includes Dog Star?
i. Irregular crater I shot
j. Oxygen in star transforming with heat
   Sign a fantastic ship's captain returned
k. Outer space angle distorted land in Africa
l. *Endeavor* re-entry's final sequence
   Launch again, holding departure for flier

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher clues. For a complete introduction to clue-solving, send an addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 745 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

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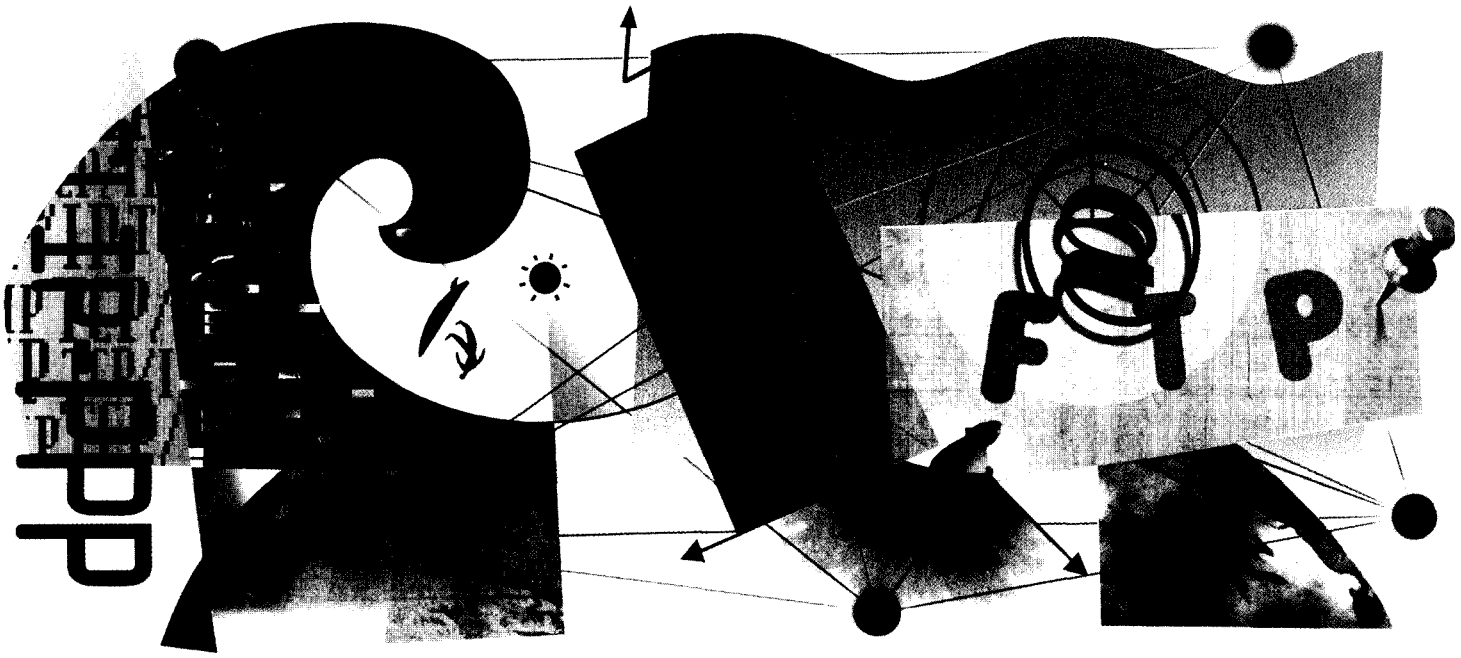

Not Yet Net

Tantalizing as the Internet may seem, for now the practical frustrations outweigh the cosmopolitan rewards

by James Fallows

HOW out of it should you feel if you're not connected to the Internet? Not very. A few years from now high-speed Internet connections will be common, especially for the professional class. But for the moment most of what's valuable about the Internet is available elsewhere with much less bother. Using the Internet remains harder than most other feats in computerdom. If you work at a university or a corporation that already has full Internet access, you're all set. If you don't, your desire to say that you, too, have surfed the Net can be thwarted by the system's architecture.

Unlike most telephone transmissions, the Internet works on a "packet-switching" protocol. A packet-switching network is so decentralized that it is practically indestructible—the reason the Defense Department paid to create and expand the Internet, starting in the 1960s. Each message sent over the Internet is broken into its constituents—that is, into small units of data, or "packets." Each packet that is sent from your computer may take its own independent path to its destination, through different phone lines and connected computer networks. On arrival the packets, from a few to many hundreds, are reassembled into a complete message.

This is a technical marvel, and it keeps the entire network as bottleneck-free as possible, since each packet follows a path that is, at the instant it departs, less crowded than all the others. But the Internet's version of packet-switching doesn't work on normal "dial-up" phone connections like those used by such mainstream services as CompuServe, Prodigy, and America Online. Anyone with a computer, a phone line, and a modem can use one of these dial-up services. But it's hard to make a direct connection to the Internet without arranging for special service from a local Internet provider. For the record, the necessary service is SLIP ("serial line Internet protocol") or PPP ("point-to-point protocol"). In addition, your computer must be able to run packet-switching software known as TCP/IP, for "transmission control protocol/Internet protocol."

FORTUNATELY, the services you can use with a normal dial-up line allow you to do most of what you would want to do if you were on the Internet. Of the four main categories of online activity, the three most important are now possible through mainstream online services.

By far the most important electronic function is E-mail, which is changing the way the world works almost as much as the telephone did. Yes, E-mail has its drawbacks. The addresses look ugly on your stationery and business card. People are tempted to log on neurotically to see if there's anything in the in-box. E-mail adds to the distractions of modern life, because people often respond to E-mail messages and message-senders they would otherwise ignore. Still, the telephone has far worse side effects, and both it and E-mail are here to stay.

E-mail is of course available from any online service, and it has recently changed in a profound but underpublicized way. Even two years ago the reach of many E-mail services was limited mainly to other people on the same service. If you were enrolled in MCIMail, you could easily send messages to other MCIMail users—but not, without problems, to someone on America Online or a university network. Now E-mail has the

Illustration by Mick Wiggins

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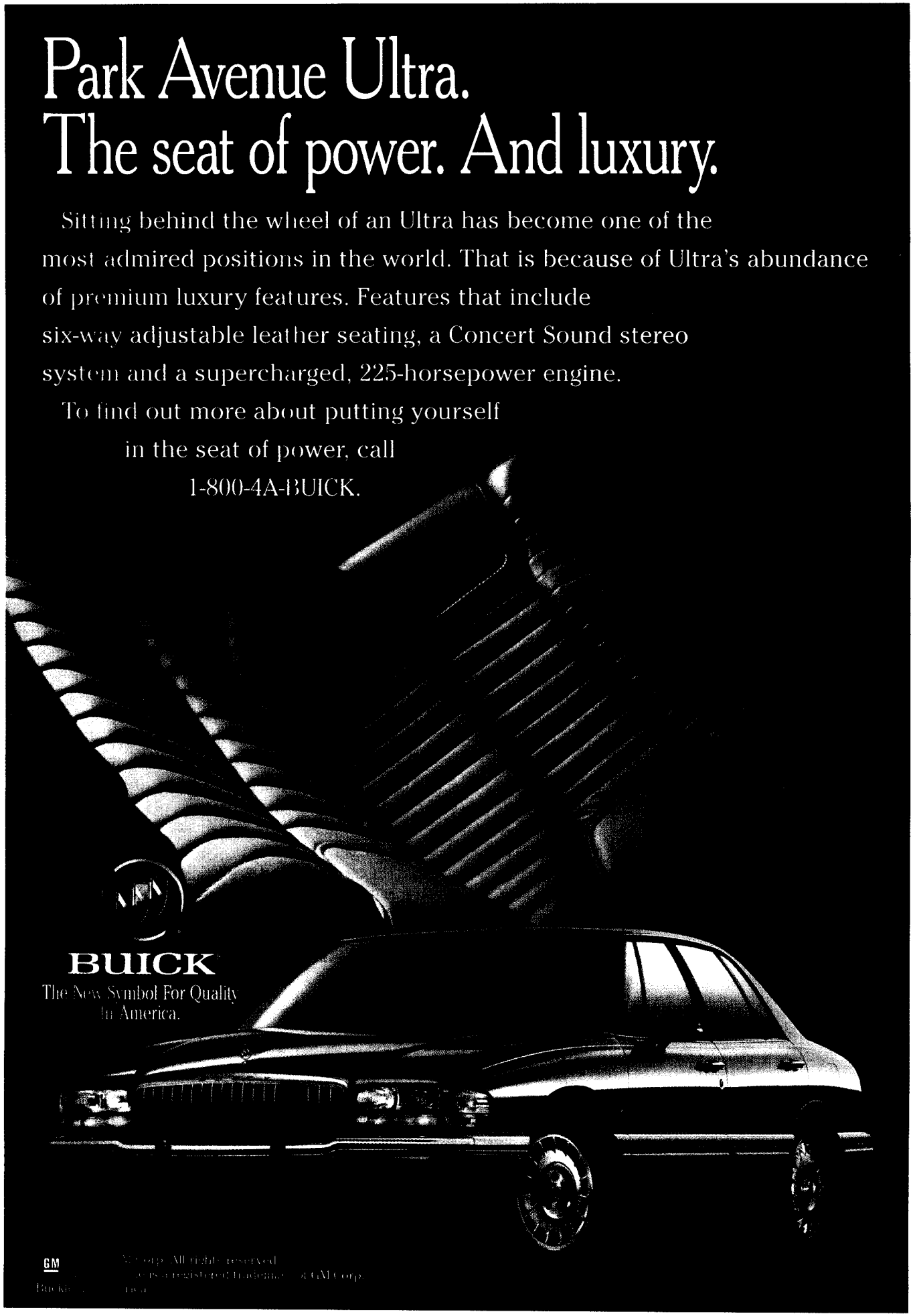
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equivalent of international direct dialing, with the "@" symbol as a way of reaching addressees on any network. The worst reminder of the old days is how difficult it is to send anything other than normal text messages (program files, say, or documents in the format used by a particular word-processing program) to people on other networks.

THE next most important electronic function is bulletin boards and online discussion groups. These sound frivolous to people who haven't explored them, and part of their role is to satisfy the basic human demand for frivolity. (I can't help following a discussion about the Fox-network program *The X-Files*, in which debate rages about whether the show is losing its stylish *Twilight Zone*–like edge as it becomes a mainstream hit.) But the boards can be of great practical value. There is no better way to solve a computer problem than to post a question about it on the CompuServe forum. Even more than E-mail, bulletin boards allow for a kind of interaction that simply was not possible before: the pooling of people with common interests from widely scattered corners of the globe. I rely for computer advice on four people I've never met, who live in central Ohio, central Texas, Vancouver, and Sydney. The closest counterparts to these "virtual communities" in the pre-online age were subscription lists for magazines, but the members of such communities had no way of reaching one another.

Bulletin boards on the Internet come in several varieties. The two main ones are "newsgroups," in which members post messages for others to read, and "mailing lists," whose members send messages in the form of E-mail to all other members. In these areas the commercial online services are actually an improvement over a direct connection to the Internet. CompuServe has the best "threading" system for its message boards, making it easy to follow the subjects that matter to you. America Online has done the most aggressive and successful job of recruiting magazines to host discussion groups. (This magazine operates a forum on AOL.) Since the middle of last year AOL has also made it easy for its members to join newsgroups and mailing lists on the Internet itself, again without the headache of SLIP or PPP.

THE third important function is finding graphic, program, or text files on a remote computer and transferring them to your machine, by means of what the Internet world knows as FTP ("file transfer protocol") and Gopher services. FTP transfers files from a site whose electronic address you already know. Gopher is a way of locating the right site. For instance, if you instruct Gopher to look for information about "earthquake," it will bring up a list of computer centers in California, Japan, Mexico, and elsewhere, whose directories you can search until you find what you want. (The name Gopher refers to the origin of this software at the University of Minnesota, home of the Golden Gophers. In a typically lame bit of nerd humor, the system will "go pher" the information you need.) Software companies increasingly make updates and bug fixes available for transfer through FTP. You can receive them instantly rather than waiting for a disk in the mail. I have texts of old presidential speeches gathered from the White House FTP site. FTP is also the basis of the thriving pornographic-picture exchange over the Internet. Like the Internet's bulletin boards, its FTP and Gopher functions are easily accessible through America Online and Prodigy, and can be used in a slightly more cumbersome way through CompuServe.

THIS leaves the fourth online function, which is the most appealing but (for now) has the least compelling practical use. You know you're really an Internet-age person when you can use the Web.

The World-Wide Web, as I explained briefly last year ("Networking," July, 1994, *Atlantic*), is a graphics-based system that reduces the world's interconnected computers to what look like a series of Macintosh or Windows display screens. Each "home page" on the Web is full of icons or highlighted phrases that will lead you to some other screen. A Web screen differs from other Internet features in relying far more on graphics, much the way a Macintosh differed from an early IBM computer. Some pages—from museums, for instance—may be full-color and nearly full-screen renderings of works of art. The home page for Thomas, the new Web site for the Library of Congress's legislative information, displays a small gray-tone rendering of Thomas Jefferson along with menus for searching the library's

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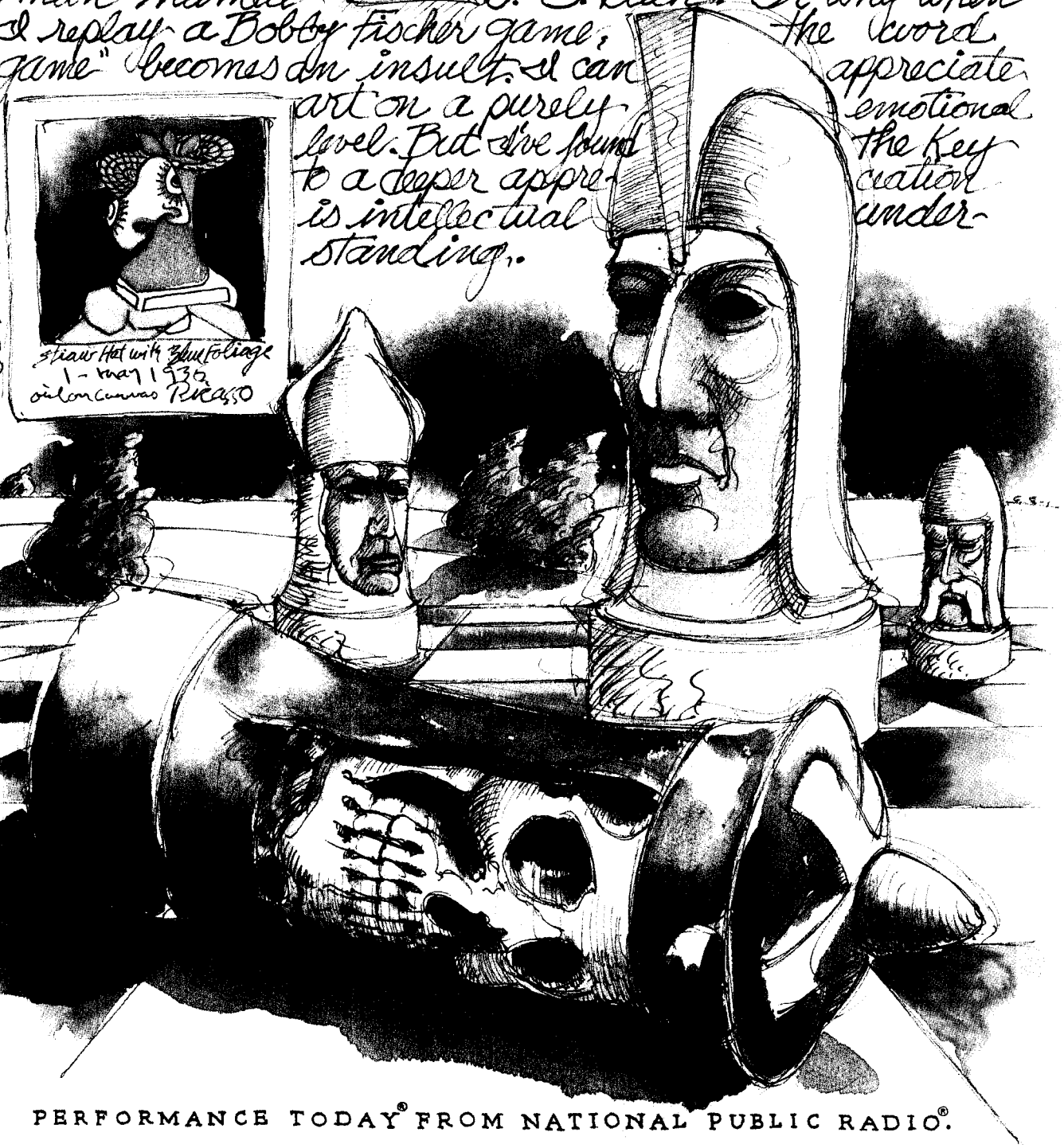
October 31

My King met an unexpected demise. Giving me, yet again, a deeper understanding of a beautiful game and reminding me of an oft forgotten truth. It's why I find a Picasso more interesting when I know why the woman has a distorted head. It's why the Art of Fugue humbles me when I realize a piece of such ingenuity was composed by a mortal man named J. S. Bach. Or why when I replay a Bobby Fischer game, the word "game" becomes an insult. I can appreciate art on a purely emotional level. But I've found the key to a deeper appreciation is intellectual understanding.



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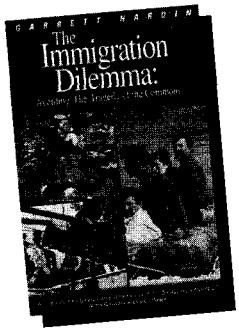

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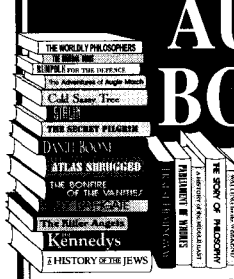

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vast archives. HotWired, a Web-based offshoot of *Wired* magazine, has shocking-pink and neon-green icons that lead to various discussion areas, serialized novels, and many other features; graphics and content seem less at war in HotWired than in the original magazine. Using the programming language for Web pages, called HTML ("hypertext markup language"), you can even create icons that, when you click on them, will play music or produce digitized speech.

Dozens of new sites seem to come onto the Web each day. Government and academic facilities were the Web's original base; now a huge boom among commercial organizations is under way. You can order flowers on the Web, after looking at photographs of various bouquets. You can see maps of vineyards in California or Australia and order wine produced there. Sooner or later the Web will certainly be *the* main electronic-information conveyor.

You can do all this with the original Web "browser," which is a program called Mosaic, or with any of a number of analogues and offshoots. The best known of them is Netscape, which was designed by Mosaic's main creator and, like Mosaic itself, is available free to individual users. (You can download Netscape by FTP from the site ftp://ftp.mcom.com. Commercial users and large computer centers have to pay.) Mosaic was created at the federally supported National Center for Supercomputing Applications, at the University of Illinois, and has been available as a free, public-domain program. (You can get it from the site ftp.ncsa.uiuc.edu.) The University of Illinois has licensed its technology, and dozens of other enterprises are now rushing for shares of what will eventually be a huge Web-browser market.

You cannot, however, easily do anything involving the Web over normal telephone lines. If you want to use the Web, your main options are to arrange a SLIP or PPP connection or to buy the new version of IBM's operating system, called OS/2 Warp. Warp comes not only with a built-in Mosaic-like Web browser, called Web Explorer, but also with TCP/IP software that lets a normal telephone line handle Internet-style packet-switching. (A program called SlipKnot does the same thing for Windows, though more slowly.)

If you don't want to take either of these options (and choosing Warp involves bucking the conventional wisdom that it is about to be quashed by Microsoft's Windows 95), you can wait for the online services to develop full Web connections. Prodigy was the first to offer a Web browser, early this year. America Online says that its version should be functioning by the end of this month. CompuServe has promised one but has not named a specific date.

In the meantime, you can console yourself by remembering the drawbacks of the Web. The main one is the other side of the Web's strength: its reliance on icons and graphics. Little pictures make the screen look bright, but because images take so long to transmit, they can also make Web browsing agonizingly slow. In fact, the best browsing software, including Netscape and Warp's Web Explorer, allows you to cut off the graphics before they come lumbering down the line. When I log onto Thomas to read the text of the Contract With America, I can get a text-only menu of search options in two or three seconds—or I can wait twenty or thirty seconds for the little portrait of Jefferson to be drawn. And this is with a modem operating at 14,400 bits per second.

The other problem with the Web is the sheer popularity of the Internet. For all the genius of the packet-switching system, traffic is growing so much faster than capacity that the entire system is showing signs of rush-hour gridlock. (America Online, which tripled its user base in 1994, has also added customers faster than capacity and suffers brownouts more often than the other services.) When getting constant busy signals from local access numbers or failing to connect to popular Web sites, I amuse myself with the old joke about the restaurant no one goes to anymore because it's so crowded. Congestion affects everything that happens on the Internet, from E-mail to file transfers, but its impact is magnified for the Web by the extra burden of transmitting graphics.

Sooner or later these problems will work themselves out, as high-speed modems become cheap and plentiful and as phone systems install higher-capacity lines with built-in packet-switching support. When that happens, you'll be able to use the Internet almost without noticing, as many people use E-mail today. Until then, don't worry. If you're one of the millions of subscribers the big online services brag about, you're not missing that much.

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The God-Haunted Adulterer

Graham Greene threw himself into sin as if it were salvation

by Charles Trueheart

THE LIFE OF GRAHAM GREENE
Volume Two: 1939–1955

by Norman Sherry. Viking, 562 pages, $34.95.

GRAHAM GREENE: The Enemy Within

by Michael Shelden. Random House, 442 pages, $25.00.

NORMAN Sherry recalls standing with Graham Greene early one Sunday morning on a railway platform in Tunbridge Wells. Sherry was leaving after a weekend visit with Greene at Greene's sister's place—just one of dozens of encounters in what is now twenty years of literary detection. The authorized biographer was standing "quite alone" on the railway platform with his furtive subject when Greene let slip an errant trepidation.

> Greene suddenly told me in his clipped, slightly hoarse voice that he'd heard his wife intended to write a book about their marriage (they had been separated for many years). However, once Greene had said that, his face took on a look of total dismay, and he opened his mouth and sang high-pitched from an old music-hall song: "Shovel the dust on the old man's coffin and take up your pen and write." He sang with such melancholy that I stood the entranced spectator of another's mortal sadness.

He had much to be sad about.

Greene died in 1991, at the age of eighty-six, having lived to see the first

Illustration by Andrea Ventura

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A dance to the music of time

BY ANTHONY POWELL

Nicholas Poussin, *A Dance to the Music of Time* (detail), c. 1639-40. The Trustees of the Wallace Collection, London Credit: Bridgeman/Art Resource, NY

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spadeful of biographical dust-shoveling. Volume One of Sherry's *The Life of Graham Greene* appeared in 1989, to generally favorable reviews. It covered Greene's solitary, brooding youth as a schoolmaster's son; his time as a provincial scribe and London subeditor; his courtship of and 1927 marriage to Vivien Dayrell-Browning, and his simultaneous conversion to Catholicism; his days as a literary squire in London; and the publication of his first novels, climaxing in 1938 with *Brighton Rock*.

Sherry's new chronicle of Greene's middle years (1939–1955) is plausibly the one most likely to contain the heart of the matter of Graham Greene. In these years Greene wrote and published his greatest—the so-called Catholic—novels, *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter*, and *The End of the Affair*, unsettling dramas that plumbed the awful, beguiling power of sin among God's own susceptible servants. Sherry would group *Brighton Rock*, with its unstinting close-up of evil at war with innocence, with the Catholic works. These mature books lifted Greene above his transitional stature as a crafter of sophisticated tales of crime and suspense, a reputation built on such early successes as *The Man Within* and *Stamboul Train*. Yet, art feeding art, Greene wrote the best of his darkly sophisticated intrigues—*The Ministry of Fear*, *The Third Man*—in the same rich Catholic period covered by Sherry's middle volume.

In the 1950s Greene's explorations of deceit and betrayal moved outward from the chambers of the human heart to the seedy, thrilling edges of a Cold War world convulsed by decolonization and the end of old orders. American obituaries of Greene seldom failed to highlight *The Quiet American*, his 1955 novel set in Saigon, which offered grim prophecies about the coming U.S. enmirement in Vietnam, or (moving beyond the scope of Sherry's new volume) *Our Man in Havana* (1958), his black comedy of espionage set in the last days of Batista's Cuba, or *The Comedians* (1966), with its haunting picture of Haiti under the cruel reign of the Tonton Macoutes.

Greene lived his last years and wrote his last books as an inconspicuous resident of Antibes and Anacapri. In the 1970s he wrote two interesting but spotty memoirs, and continued to attract readers, if sometimes tepid notices, with such novels as *The Honorary Consul* (1973) and *The Human Factor* (1978). In the 1980s his famous boredom became apparent as he turned his hand to experiments in polemic. If Greene, coining a term, called his slighter action novels "entertainments," the works of his last years—*Monsignor Quixote*, *J'Accuse*, *Getting to Know the General*, *The Captain and the Enemy*—might be seen as self-entertainments, the set pieces and infatuations of an accomplished idler who was awaiting the deliverance he had courted all his life.

Graham Greene was "thought by many," in Sherry's oddly hedging formulation, "to be the greatest novelist of his generation, and also the most successful (his books have sold more than twenty million copies and have been translated into over forty languages)." Greene was a cinematic writer, and a movie followed virtually every novel, broadcasting his vision of Greeneland—bleak landscapes of the soul, where virtue struggles for breath—to a huge public. The Nobel Prize for Literature was denied him, but in that regard he died in distinguished company.

As Greene seemed to suspect on the railway platform, a writer's life only begins with a list of works. And Greene was, as his books implicitly proclaimed, an anguished and very public seeker—of truth, of knowledge, of danger, of sin, and of fictionable material at the far edges of experience. These new biographies paint an unpretty picture of the toll his compulsion took, or should have taken, on Greene; but it's a mesmerizing picture too, of how the compulsion took on the contours of artistic genius.

Was his lawless, heedless, corrupting behavior in service to mere self-gratification? Or was it in sacrifice to the wondrous art it generated? These are questions that Greene's life, and these new lives, only deepen, never answer. We may, however, test the following hypothesis: It is not the biographers' hostility that Greene had to fear but their understanding.

ALONGSIDE Sherry's book comes *Graham Greene: The Enemy Within*, a new biography by Michael Shelden. It offers a chronologically complete and manageably succinct account of Greene's whole life, along with lively and occasionally shrewd readings of his novels, a few of which Shelden considers brilliant.

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The scholar in Shelden is closely attuned to the nuance and disguise of Greene's fiction. The didact in him sees behind it a man Shelden does not think any of us should like or admire: an adulterer, a whoremaster, a masochist, a liar, an anti-Semite, a quasi-pedophile, a racist, a snob, a hater, a spy, a hypocrite, and, if it is not redundant, a bad Catholic.

"It is not a good idea to have only one biography of Greene," according to Shelden, who was the official biographer of George Orwell. What is needed, he wrote in last year's British and Canadian editions of the book, is "a completely independent study. . . that allows ample room for an occasional wild surmise and 'gratuitous indecency.'" The latter phrase was a charge once hurled at Greene for questioning a married lady's fidelity in the only biography he wrote, *Lord Rochester's Monkey*. As for "wild surmise," the other biographers' freedom Shelden claims, the phrase has been deleted in the American edition.

I was reading Shelden's book last fall when I heard that its author would be speaking in the "Literary Lives" series at the International Festival of Authors at Harbourfront, in Toronto, where I live. I had already absorbed the parts of the book in which Shelden lays out the uncomfortable evidence of Greene's penchant for making anti-Semitic remarks, especially through his narrators and characters. I had noted Shelden's sinister picture of Greene's long ties to British intelligence. I had widened my eyes at the fantastic insinuations he makes—coyly, gingerly—that Greene may have been involved in a Brighton murder that wound up in his darkest book, *Brighton Rock*. And I'd gotten an inkling of Greene's sexual peccadilloes, including the pleasure he took in receiving pain—cigarette burns, specifically—during lovemaking. (Greene visited and befriended many prostitutes in his underworld explorations. The only surviving tally, Sherry reports in a footnote, left off at forty-seven.)

Yet even forearmed, I was surprised when Shelden devoted virtually his entire Toronto presentation to these provocative details and others (for example, Greene called Mexicans "hideous") that sharpen his book's controversial profile. Shelden was not shrinking from the role of debunker. At an earlier literary function, in England, he told us by way of an opening

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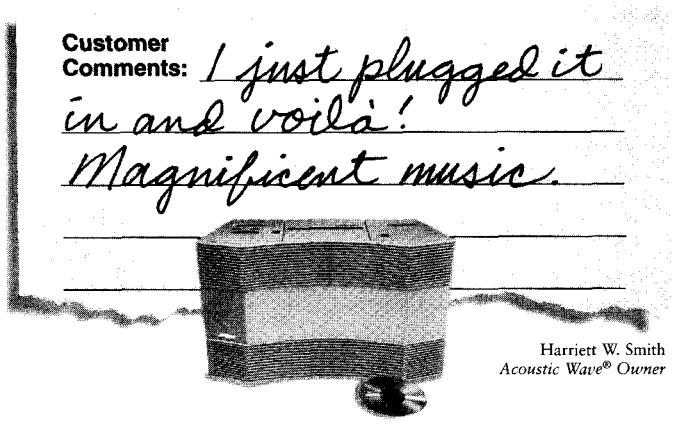

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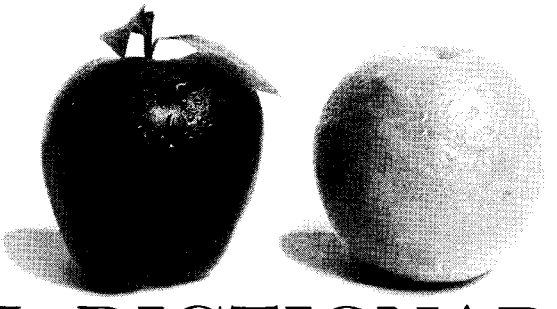

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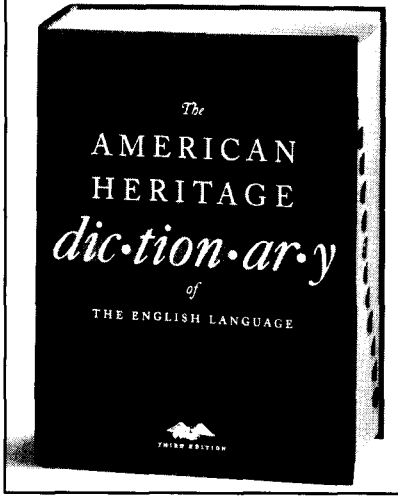

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brag, someone in the audience had interrupted him to cry "Balls!"

That afternoon Shelden managed to lay into Sherry as well as Greene. In checking off a few of the textual instances in Greene's work of crude Jewish stereotyping and other period ugliness, Shelden alluded to a diary entry about Greene's coming upon a victim lying in bombed-out rubble during the Blitz. In the first published version (1952) of the diary the man was described as a "large fat foreign Jew." Nearly thirty years later, excerpting the diary in his memoir *Ways of Escape*, Greene revised the line to read "large fat foreigner." It is the bowdlerized version, Shelden told us, that Sherry quotes. Shelden pronounced that kind of revisionism "inexcusable," comparing it to Stalin's habit of having discredited rivals airbrushed from official photographs.

Now, one might feel that Greene was being damned for the original offense and then damned for the best public atonement he could muster (which Shelden calls "rewriting history"). Greene did go on to win the Jerusalem Prize, one of the Jewish world's highest honors. Still, I wish I had heard this sorry fact and its ilk not from Shelden, whose predilection to see, hear, and speak evil of Greene is transparent, but from Sherry, who cannot claim that anything of the kind is outside the scope of, or would unnecessarily clutter, a work that may eventually surpass 2,000 closely printed pages. Sherry promises in his introduction, "I have not, to repeat what Boswell said of Johnson, cut off his claws, nor made this tiger a cat."

After listening to a few of the questions from the Toronto audience, I raised my hand and asked Shelden the question that had been nettling me throughout his lecture: What reward had he found in devoting his time and energy to a life he held in such contempt? Had he found anything uplifting in his research on and consideration of Graham Greene? I was raising a by-now-tiresome quarrel with "pathography," as Joyce Carol Oates has indelibly termed the modern art of negative biography. Shelden said he didn't find the question relevant. Like Poe and Baudelaire, he said, Greene had been able to distill art from evil, and in that sense "his vision of evil is uplifting." He identified his own theme as "the poetics of evil," an engaging phrase that I might amend, in the instant case, to "the poetics of sin."

Greene's life—like Frank Sinatra's, perhaps, or Bob Packwood's—puts an old question: Can one despise the man and adore the art? (Can one hate the sin and love the sinner?) On this question Shelden writes emphatically.

> The inescapable fact is that Greene's genius is marred by a wide streak of malice. Nothing can wish that away or excuse it. But it is not a valid reason for dismissing his novels as works of art. Nor can the art excuse, in any way, the malice.

Emphatically, it seems to me, he cannot make up his mind. I sympathize. It is a conundrum.

WHAT struck me in moving from the Shelden to the Sherry, apart from a dramatically lower rpm and a chance to drink in the countryside, was how unblinking Sherry has been in exposing Greene's manifold sins and wickednesses—one disturbing exception having been duly noted. Sherry's penchant for inclusion (to say nothing of the fruits of access and cooperation) offers the reader the courtesy of context rather than the pressure of argument. Perhaps Shelden had just primed me for the subject, but I found the kitchen-sinker better able than the stiletto wielder to reveal the guilty (and sometimes not-so-guilty) cheater in the gnarly depths of Greene's tortured soul.

Whatever else it may have done for his soul, Greene's embrace of adultery provided him with the dramatic themes—both the heart and the gray matter, really—of *The Heart of the Matter* and *The End of the Affair*, and many later books too. Adultery was for Greene the anvil on which the human soul, not just his own, could be pounded into its wretched but holy state. And adultery was for him the most painful articulation of a grander human ailment: the propensity to betray the ones we love. Seen in the light of his investigations of the human heart, Greene's affinity for espionage (in his books, in his life) seems part of a larger fascination with loyalty and betrayal, and on the practical level with disguise and deception. It is perhaps only a few steps down that path of self-abnegation to suicide, one of Greene's rare unconsummated temptations.

We can no longer read his great books without knowing that at the height of his creative powers and international success Greene was openly betraying not just Vivien, his ever-patient wife and the mother of his two children, but also Dorothy Glover, his devoted mistress of nearly a decade's standing and waiting. While these two women each imagined that Greene would come to his senses, he was obsessively—and quite publicly—in thrall to a new mistress, a rich American woman named Catherine Walston, who was twelve years his junior, long married, the mother of five, and, in a touch Greene might have invented, his goddaughter. Flagrantly attractive and as sex-obsessed as Greene, Catherine gave him fodder for at least two of his great novels, and was (in Sherry's view) the woman who came closest to knowing Greene and moving his spirit.

In a biography of any other writer such obsessive and punishing adultery might dominate the life story. But Sherry's broad-mindedness about his subject, and about the infinite variety of human experience, gives us a Greene who is not the sum of his failings stacked on a teetering scale against the sum of his artistry. Sherry provides unweighably more: a Greene of icy wit, of childish sentimentality, of restless chutzpah, of harnessed agony.

Sherry reported in Volume One that what persuaded Greene to choose him as his biographer was Sherry's stated intention of following wherever he could in Greene's footsteps—as he had in Joseph Conrad's, for five books that had impressed Greene. Sherry is proud to mention that he visited the same villages and hotels as Greene, smelled the same smells, and even contracted, in the same establishment, a tropical ailment Greene had suffered from several decades before.

The attention to Greene in his every place and time is palpable in Sherry's chapters on Greene's sojourns in Vietnam at the bitter end of the French era and the insidious predawn of the American one. Here as elsewhere Sherry tracked down (in Saigon and around the world) plenty of the living to give their accounts and corrections of the incidents and characters that Greene transmuted into *The Quiet American*. From eyewitnesses and other accounts Sherry re-creates a terrible bombing in front of the Continental Palace hotel which found its way into the novel, and takes the trouble to investigate suspicions advanced in the novel's pages that the politically favored, including

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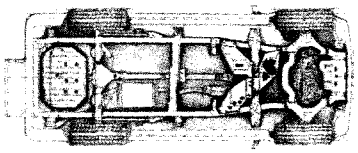

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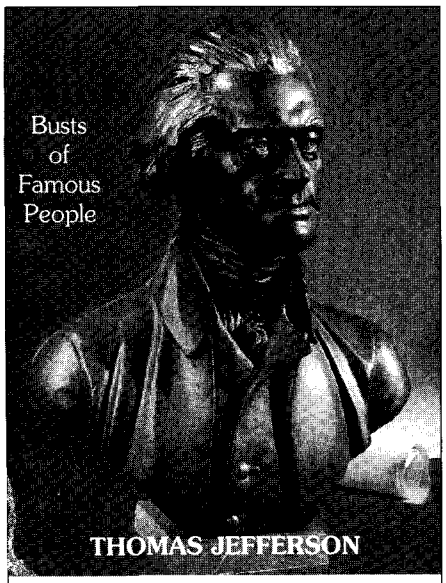

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American officials, were tipped off to the event in time to avoid the carnage.

Sherry's life also reminds us that Greene was much more than an accomplished writer of two kinds of novels—that is, the serious and the less so. In the late thirties and more fully in the period of Volume Two he was a London magazine editor, a respected film critic and book reviewer, a bigfoot travel writer, a Hollywood scriptwriter, and a wright of mostly bad plays. In the middle of this global bustle—not forgetting the time commitments of carrying on a marriage and two demanding love affairs—Greene the inveterate hunter-gatherer of experience served as an air-raid warden during the Blitz and spent more than a year in the British intelligence service in West Africa. When his fame erupted in the 1940s, Greene became one of those larger-than-life celebrities who are much more common today. Sought for comment on spiritual matters and then political ones, he was able to, say, take tea with Ho Chi Minh. In his championship of the Third World underdog, in his friendship with Kim Philby, in his provocations of McCarthy-era U.S. authorities, he garnered a reputation for left-wing sympathies that he sputtered about and made headlines with and believed in when it suited him.

All the while he found time to be, as people were in those days, a prodigious correspondent. Sherry's (and Shelden's) enormous debt to Greene's thousands of personal letters raises for the umpteenth time the question What will biographers of our major contemporary writers do for material?

GREENE took comfort in Charles Péguy's maxim "The sinner is at the very heart of Christianity." The phrase is the epigraph to *The Heart of the Matter*, and aptly summarizes Greene's view of that book's helplessly adulterous Major Scobie. Scobie, Evelyn Waugh once wrote, "dies believing himself damned but also in an obscure way. . . believing that he is offering his damnation as a loving sacrifice for others." (Waugh was compelled to point out that "the idea of willing my own damnation for the love of God is either a very loose poetical expression or a mad blasphemy.")

One prominent Jesuit critic, C. C. Martindale, called Scobie "an honest but rather superficial Catholic [who] finds that in proportion as he sins, his faith in Him against Whom he sins is intensified." Sherry believes that Martindale may also have been referring to Greene's then tempestuous affair with Catherine Walston. Their correspondence and other evidence bear out the impression that Greene and Walston acted as though their faith made their passion—their coupling, even—God's own mysterious handiwork. Guilelessly they longed for a time when they could make love and receive the sacraments on the same day.

Greene will not sit well with anyone who is impatient with ambiguity (or blasphemy) or bristles at the spectacle of weakness. George Orwell, in a response to Scobie in *The New Yorker*, declared, "If he really felt that adultery is mortal sin, he would stop committing it." To which Sherry, who is given to saying what he thinks, replies,

> What a simple, straightforward, absolutist mental world George Orwell lived in. Our betrayers are often not outside ourselves, but within. It was not Stalinist dictatorships which troubled Greene, it was the hounds of Heaven. Like Scobie, Greene felt he was the source of suffering in those he loved most.

This may be one answer to the questions posed on the first page of this book: "Why was life so impossible for Greene? Why was suicide a constant thought?"

"I've said to him often," the long-suffering Vivien told Sherry in 1979, "'If only you'd forget your guilt you'd treat me more nicely.' It's because of that that he's nastier to me. He's got no sense of guilt with [the] others. There's no vows. Guilt makes you hate yourself, and then that rebounds on the person." Guilt and something else, perhaps. Sherry mentions in the discreetest of footnotes that his man had had the "disease" of depression from the age of thirteen.

In a letter to Evelyn Waugh, Greene blurted out the frustration he felt at some of the attacks leveled against him. "Can't one write books about moral cowards?" he asked, as if to say, Who better to know one? The state of sin is, let us admit, more familiar to most people than its irreproachable opposite. That may be one more reason, beyond all the other essentials of creative mastery they pack, why Greene's books reach so many people where they live.

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Hardheaded Reveries

by Michael Sragow

THE GRAHAM GREENE FILM READER:

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GRAHAM Greene's collected film criticism—consisting of movie reviews he wrote regularly from 1935 to 1940 for *The Spectator* and the short-lived weekly *Night and Day*—first appeared twenty-three years ago, in a volume that omitted critiques of roughly eighty movies. The prime attraction of *The Graham Greene Film Reader* is that it reprints his body of criticism in full. And the body lives! Greene deserves a place next to James Agee, Manny Farber, Dwight Macdonald, and Pauline Kael as one of the wittiest and most incisive writers ever to tarry in the dark. His criticism was written with the flashing point and deft feints of a fencing master. It's suavely triumphant—a thirties-movie history composed on the run, in light refracted alternately through grimy windows and champagne glasses, catching the risky extremes of an era of gleaming tommy guns and white telephones.

Greene's passion for movies is embedded in the compact intensity of his prose. This critic delivered aphorisms as if he had just thought them up: an obscure French film prompted him to muse, "The literature of escape is literature just because it is a real escape; it contains a recognition of life as much as the action of a deserter contains the recognition of an enemy." He meted out justice with Cagney-like quickness—he seemed both to prophesy and to pass judgment when he observed, "A high-class murder is the simple artistic ideal of most film directors."

His mode of hardheaded reverie evokes the morally booby-trapped universe of his novels and screenplays (certainly the ones he conjured for the director Carol Reed: *The Fallen Idol*, *The Third Man*, and *Our Man in Havana*). He believed that the best art and entertainment are imbued with a sense of good and evil and a mental toughness; he insisted that moviemakers not put "an exaggerated value on adolescent emotion."

Greene was catholic as well as Catholic. He realized that movies thrive when they define their era. Here's how he summed up *After the Thin Man*: "Perhaps in five years it will all seem as dull and ugly as tubular steel chairs, but at the moment it is—amusingly and excitingly—1937." He enjoyed German expressionism, French lyricism, and Hollywood's melodramatic drive; unlike many Soviet-film buffs, he didn't overidealize movie editing, and even satirized montage: "the long whiskers of depraved aristocrats shot from one angle, the short whiskers of simple peasants shot from another." His commentary is suffused with sociopolitical awareness. In his shrewd analysis of a now-forgotten German *Joan of Arc* he wrote, "The direction is terribly sincere, conveying a kind of blond and shaven admiration for lonely dictators who have been forced to eliminate their allies."

Greene covered short subjects, revivals—whatever happened to be opening in London that week. A typical column addressed anything from a Harold Lloyd comedy (*The Milky Way*) or an Eddie Cantor comedy (*Strike Me Pink*) to the Basil Wright–Harry Watt documentary *Night Mail* and Josef von Sternberg's *Crime and Punishment*. In fact, those are the contents of his March 20, 1936, entry. By considering these diverse ingredients, Greene was able to express a lot of what he felt about Hollywood exports. He liked the no-holds-barred kidding around of the comedies, and he disliked "lunch-bar-chromium" versions of classics—among them Von Sternberg's rendering of Dostoyevsky: "vulgar as only the great New World can be vulgar. . .with the hollow optimism about human nature of a salesman who has never failed to sell his canned beans."

Greene was a nimble pundit. He picked up themes, dropped, retrieved, and enlarged on them from one column to the next. Some of his preoccupations are hilarious—he relentlessly put down singing mouths seen in close-up—and some disturbing: while arguing for a national movie culture, he made fun of the "dark"

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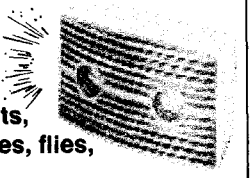

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or "alien" or "Semitic" barons of international cinema (now a *Spectator* tradition). Like Kael, Greene was alive to the erotics of movies. His rhapsodizing about "lovers in the stifling inn room beating off flies, lying about among the soiled clothes" in the French film *Orage* presaged Kael's remarks about *Last Tango in Paris*. His sensual reactions vitalized his descriptions of a live-wire performer like Bette Davis: "That precise nervy voice, the pale ash-blonde hair, the popping neurotic eyes, a kind of corrupt and phosphorescent prettiness." In 1937 he made the notorious declaration that in *Wee Willie Winkie*, Shirley Temple finally went "completely totsy" and "her admirers—middle-aged men and clergymen—respond to her dubious coquetry, the sight of her well-shaped and desirable little body." (Twentieth Century-Fox brought a successful libel suit contending that Greene had accused the company of "procuring" Temple for "immoral purposes.")

In Greene's writing on film (as in Kael's), sensuality and naughtiness are part of an expansive aesthetic that calls for more sensation and realism and poetry than are permitted in proper middle-class culture. Greene frequently referred to Chekhov's praise of his favorite novelists: they make you see, "besides life as it is, also life as it ought to be, and this captivates you." At the same time, he held that moviemakers could reclaim "poetic drama" as a popular art not in Chekhovian settings but in the street—if writers and directors "dive below the polite level, to something nearer to the common life." Kael quoted that passage, and others, in her review of *Mean Streets*.

Greene's hard-edged attitudes went hand in hand with an appealing, youthful freshness; it's as if he needed a wised-up demeanor to protect his feelings. The boy who adored the adventure novels of H. Rider Haggard and Anthony Hope is never far from these reviews, just as the girl who adored Oz is never far from Kael's. "Only the cinema," Greene wrote, "is able in its most fantastic moments to give a sense of absurd unreasoning happiness, a kind of poignant release: you can't catch it in prose." The glory of his movie reviews is that they compel the reader to think as complexly as an adult and respond as nakedly as a child.

Documents as Narrative

by John W. Aldridge

OSWALD'S TALE: An American Mystery

by Norman Mailer. Random House, 848 pages, $30.00.

In an amusingly poignant moment in *The Armies of the Night* (1968), Norman Mailer described a painful exchange he had with Robert Lowell during preparations for the 1967 march on the Pentagon to protest the Vietnam War. "'You know, Norman,' said Lowell in his fondest voice, 'Elizabeth [Hardwick] and I really think you're the finest journalist in America.'" Mailer's response just managed to conceal the damage done to his gigantic yet oddly fragile self-esteem. "'Well, Cal,' said Mailer, using Lowell's nickname for the first time, 'there are days when I think of myself as being the best writer in America'"—meaning, of course, the best writer of fiction.

Mailer had for years worked hard to gain public credence for this idea of himself, which had obsessed him since the enormous success of his novel *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). That book set a standard he forever after struggled to meet. But the fact is that his particular form of journalism has consistently won him more popular and critical acclaim than any of his novels has been able to achieve. For *The Armies of the Night* he received both the National Book Award and a Pulitzer Prize; a second Pulitzer was awarded for *The Executioner's Song* (1979), a huge study of the life and crimes of the murderer Gary Gilmore, which Mailer called "a true life novel." In a certain sense it is, but it is more precisely an example of creative imagination brilliantly at work on materials that in other hands would be treated with uninspired literalness.

In this new book, *Oswald's Tale: An American Mystery*, Mailer again expresses his fascination with the criminal mind. This equally huge chronicle has a far more complex and enigmatic subject: Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin of President John F. Kennedy, who was himself murdered before he could be brought to trial. But Mailer's method this time is journalistic rather than quasi-fictional, and it relies on the documentation of every fact that is already known or is here revealed for the first time about Oswald's life, from his childhood years to his death.

Whenever in the past forty years Mailer has published fiction, it has been received uncharitably, even with considerable rancor, as if it triggered the popular hostility to his public behavior—as if it were automatically seen as the most intimate personal expression of the wildly obnoxious self that he established long ago as his public persona. His most recent novel, *Harlot's Ghost* (1991), which had to do with dirty tricks perpetrated by the CIA, among other things, was greeted with a surly refusal in some quarters to judge it on its very considerable merits and with a nearly universal indignation over the fact that Mailer had the gall to conclude such a very long book (1,282 pages) with the statement "To be continued."

What made matters worse was that he often made use in his fiction of ideas that, when he expressed them in essays and interviews or acted them out in public, seemed distasteful or aberrational. In *The Time of Her Time* (1959), which first earned him his position at the top of the militant-feminist hit list, the protagonist, Sergius O'Shaugnessy, brutally ravishes the female character both vaginally and anally in order to vanquish her hostility to him and drive her against her will to apocalyptic orgasm, a climax that is both physical and, for Mailer, a mystical attainment of harmonious selfhood, which in this case appears to mean a selfhood in full womanly subservience to the ruttish male.

An American Dream (1964), surely the most extensively pilloried of his novels, employed a Dostoevskian form of the murder mystery as a vehicle for his character's belief in the spiritually restorative effects of uxoricide—this after Mailer's near-fatal stabbing of his second wife, Adele, in 1960. In *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967) he sought to demonstrate the cathartic possibilities of the scatolog-

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ical—how the use of obscenity, which the novel abundantly exhibits, might be a means of purging ourselves of the aggressions that were expressed in the obscenity of the Vietnam War. Again, the merits of these novels were ignored because their deeply offensive themes seemed to confirm the widespread impression that their author, in his depravity, was a malignant blight on the sanctity of American letters.

YET as far back as 1959, in *Advertisements for Myself*, a collection of Mailer's essays, fiction, and ruminations on his life and career, something quite remarkable had begun to occur, something that was noted by few at the time but that was to bring about a gradual shift of opinion in Mailer's favor—not in the reputation of his novels but in the critical and popular response to his journalism.

Advertisements, parts of which were obviously written from the bottomless depths of his sense of literary failure, contained an agonizing delineation of his frustrations and personal mistakes and the collapse of the high hopes for fame that his large first success had engendered in him. His disappointment was so traumatic, he said, that it had been largely responsible for his bad public behavior.

Throughout the autobiographical sections the plaintive message was clear: Mailer not only *deserved* serious recognition for what he saw as the underrated novels he had written after *The Naked and the Dead*; far more crucially he *needed* it, to give him the renewed confidence that would nourish his enormous ambition to bring about, through his future work, a radical change in the consciousness of his time.

To many readers, *Advertisements* seemed conclusive proof of Mailer's descent into the failure he so bitterly lamented. But the response of those few who retained sympathy for him was exactly the opposite: they saw that in anatomizing his bleakest woes in the language of grief, he had, perhaps unwittingly, discovered a distinctive style, his true style, one very different from, and incomparably more authentic than, the writing in his earlier novels. It was a vigorous and free-wheeling idiom that blended the mean talk of the ghetto and the quick,

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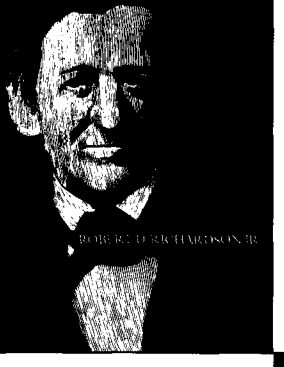

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edgy rhetoric of the psychopath into a prose instrument as keen and deadly as a switchblade. For those who saw this, the irony was deep and disturbing: in writing about the refusal of the public to recognize him as a major talent, Mailer had happened upon a form of personal confession that represented the first visible evidence of the large, perhaps even major, size of his talent.

Mailer also discovered in *Advertisements for Myself* the subject that came to be central to his later journalism: Norman Mailer himself, as beleaguered victim, antihero, and outlandish buffoon, a character who became steadily more attractive, not so much because the things he described himself as saying and doing had ceased to seem deplorable but because a new note of humor and self-parodic mockery crept into the descriptions, giving them a quality of refreshing candor about his personal fears and insecurities. This stylistic frankness proved to be a powerfully effective antidote to the hostility of his enemies.

In the book-length journalism he began to write in the late sixties and early seventies—*The Armies of the Night*, *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968), *Of a Fire on the Moon* (1970), and *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971)—Mailer, calling himself simply "Mailer" or "the reporter" or "Aquarius" or "the Prisoner," became the true protagonist of the action he was describing. Separating the author from the story was no longer either necessary or possible; Mailer in his several personae made the story. It was, after all, *his* Pentagon march, *his* moon launch, *his* prison of sex; the final effect was extremely seductive.

The traits displayed by these personae had long been features of Mailer's public behavior. But when he had displayed them in that way, they had earned him only hostility. Now he had found a means of using them as literary material; in so doing he had turned his worst traits of character into almost lovable virtues. That, more than anything, more even than the excellent reporting to be found in them, earned his books of journalism the positive recognition he had so long sought.

But then, after having made what appeared to be a crucial breakthrough, Mailer abruptly abandoned his most charismatic character and went on to produce a book astonishingly devoid of any trace of his distinctive voice and presence. *The Executioner's Song* was instead composed so as to view Gary Gilmore and the people involved with him as characters creating their own novel out of what they were and did in real life. Mailer wisely allowed them to speak for themselves, in a variety of prose styles that emulated the manner in which they customarily spoke, with the result that they were individualized by the distinctive personalities of their idioms at the same time that they were given dramatic coherence by the tightly choreographed nature of the case itself, as it evolved from the murders Gilmore committed, through his trial and the efforts made to prevent his execution, to his death in Utah by firing squad. Mailer evidently believed that all he had to do was keep himself aloof from the story, the Joycean artist invisible, and depict actualities that were far more bizarre and compelling than anything he might have been able to imagine. He said in a 1980 interview, "What I had was gold, if I had enough sense not to gild it."

Mailer had good reason to believe he had gold. In Gilmore he seems to have recognized a character who embodied many of the preoccupations and ideas that had possessed him through much of his adult life: a capacity for violence, mysticism, belief in karma and reincarnation, the appeal of beautiful women, and the redemptive power of sex. His identification with Gilmore was so complete that he felt no need to tell the story in his own familiar voice. The drama and its meaning were already clear in the factual details. The story required no gilding.

Even before he decided to write the book, Mailer had access to an abundance of interviews and documents gathered by Lawrence Schiller, a film producer and literary entrepreneur who had worked closely with him on his previous books *Marilyn* (1973) and *The Faith of Graffiti* (1974). This helped him to develop a comprehensive knowledge of his subject without the arduous research that would otherwise have been required of him. Moreover, the brief nine-month period of the action, nearly all of it occurring in Utah, gave his story a classic unity of time and place which helped to provide a form for the tragedy Mailer clearly thought the story was. The period was still fresh in the memories of the many

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people Schiller had interviewed; some had been questioned even before Gilmore was sentenced to die. Above all, the story contained no large and vexing mysteries or ambiguities. Gilmore's movements before, during, and after his crimes, and right up to the hours before his death, had been thoroughly documented, and much evidence was on record concerning his traits of character and states of mind throughout the action, because his various relatives, and in particular his girlfriend, Nicole Baker, had had ample opportunity to discover who the human being was behind the public mask of the murderer.

IN writing *Oswald's Tale: An American Mystery*, Mailer had virtually none of these advantages, and the story's dramatic situation is more complicated and far less clearly defined. Of his books this one most closely resembles *The Executioner's Song*, at least in content, yet it is not in any sense "a true life novel." Rather it is, as I have said, the product of a huge labor of investigative journalism, in which the factual documentation itself comes to be the principal narrative method.

The countless interviews that form the major part of the documentation were recorded by Mailer, Schiller, and others, and are offered in the text quite frankly as interviews conducted with people who knew Lee Harvey and Marina Oswald at various times in their lives. Some remember Marina during her childhood and early youth in Leningrad. Others provide an account of Oswald's arrival in the Soviet Union in October of 1959, when he applied for but did not receive Soviet citizenship. Still others bear witness to the couple's courtship and marriage, and Oswald's agonized decision to return with Marina to this country in the spring of 1962.

The story culminates, of course, in the assassination of John F. Kennedy, in November of 1963. Further statements, drawn in part from Warren Commission testimony by Oswald's relatives, various friends who came to know the couple after they settled in Dallas, and others who had information about them at the time of the assassination and afterward, complete the book.

One difficulty confronting Mailer was that much of this material is based on rec-

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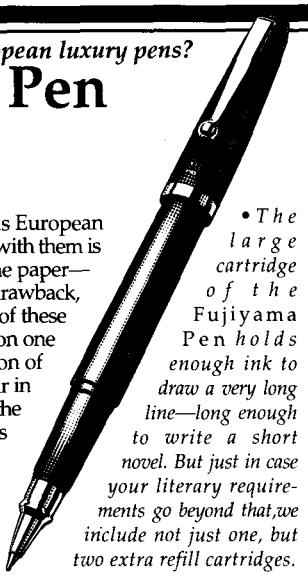

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■ For the first six centuries after the Moslems spilled forth from the Arabian peninsula, they conquered much of the then known world. The Arab Moslems did in their ascendancy indeed give rise to a substantial civilization. But then, beginning with their expulsion from Spain, a long decline set in that lasted until the beginning of the 20th century. That decline was the more bitter, the more frustrating, because it was inflicted by the hated and despised "infidels". It was something that had to be remedied by whatever means. Injured pride had to be salved; the enemies who caused this intolerable humiliation and this painful injury had to be destroyed.

■ The 20th century brought national independence to the Arab states. Two other fundamental events occurred: 1) The discovery of the world's largest oil deposits under the Arabian peninsula, and 2) The creation, in 1948 of the state of Israel, which ever since its birth has been the concentrated focus of the hatred and venom of all Moslem Arabs, a hatred that unites them, that even surpasses their hatreds against each other, and that has launched them into five disastrous wars against Israel. Even the rape of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's Iraq was explained as being a step towards the "liberation of Palestine", a claim so bizarre, so patently absurd that it can only be comprehended and given credence by a mind obsessed with the ideology of Arab Islam.

■ The obsession of the Moslem Arabs with Israel is totally irrational. To have Israel, an advanced highly civilized Western outpost, as an independent country in the middle of the Arab-Moslem world is utterly intolerable to them. That is the reason that, making allowance for the very cold peace with Egypt and the recently concluded peace with Jordan, the 21 Arab states, among them the richest countries in the world, with a combined population of more than 200 million and with a land area greater than that of the U.S., have since the beginning of the century concentrated obsessive ferocity by military, economic, ideological, political, diplomatic, and any other means to destroy the tiny Jewish community of Palestine, and its successor, the Jewish state of Israel—only 4 million people, in a country just one-half the size of San Bernardino County in California.

The recent events in the United States, Argentina and England have sobered many who had believed the Israel-Palestinian conflict to be the cause for the unrest in the Middle East. The fact is that war is endemic in the Arab world and that the Moslem Arabs have been waging war against each other and against their non-Arab neighbors for centuries. But, as much as the Moslem Arabs hate each other, most of them are united in their greater hatred against the "infidel Jews" and their tiny country, and they have built vast war machines for the ultimate "jihad" to chase the Jews into the sea. The insincere focus on the Palestinian plight is designed to divert attention from the many domestic problems and inter-Arab conflicts, and to direct the Moslem Arab frustration against Israel, the "infidel Western outsider". The suggestion that Israel divest itself from its historic heartland, the 2,362 sq. mi, "West Bank" and from the Golan Heights would be a step toward its strategic suicide. The real cause of the never-ending turmoil in the Middle East is the unremitting desire of still most of the Arab Moslem states to destroy Israel, their inability to come to terms with its very existence. That hatred and that intolerance are fueled by Arab-Moslem fanaticism and intransigence and unwillingness to accept diversity in the region. Only when that will be overcome can peace and tranquility finally come to the Middle East.

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ollections of events that occurred thirty or forty years ago. Even when the interviews concern events of the post-assassination years, they lack the intimacy and freshness of the testimony in *The Executioner's Song*. Apparently no one, not even his wife, mother, or brother, knew Oswald well, and the book demonstrates that in most important respects he was impossible to know, if only because he seemed a stranger even to himself.

Another and far more serious difficulty was that Mailer clearly lacked sympathy for Oswald and could not identify with him as he had with Gilmore. Oswald was a powerful demonstration of the utter banality of the criminal mind, an infantile, wimpish sort of person who was motivated by impulsively formed and largely groundless ideas about himself and the nature of the world—the most ominous being that he was destined to perform some fearless act that would forever change the course of history and elevate him to greatness.

Oswald apparently wanted to become a Soviet citizen because he had had trouble finding a decent job in the United States, had had some painful experiences (which he brought entirely on himself) during his service in the Marine Corps, and had supposed that idyllic Communist propaganda accurately described the possibilities of life in the Soviet Union. He fantasized that once he was there he would immediately be recognized as an invaluable asset to the Soviet government—just as, later, when he tried (and failed) to obtain a visa to go to Cuba, he imagined that he would be elevated to a high position there as an expert on Soviet and American affairs.

Oswald was, in short, an altogether unpromising candidate for the bleak notoriety that the historical moment thrust upon him, and he was surely the worst possible candidate for the kind of intricate and tragic role that Mailer had conferred on Gilmore. Mailer was left, therefore, with little alternative but to bring together all the available information concerning Oswald and to raise all the familiar unanswerable questions: Did Oswald act alone in killing Kennedy, or were other marksmen involved? Was he a hired hit man for the FBI, the CIA, or the Mafia? Did Jack Ruby shoot him because Ruby, too, was an agent of the Mafia, or was Ruby telling the truth when he said that he sim-

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ply wanted to spare Jacqueline Kennedy the anguish of having to appear as a key witness at Oswald's trial?

Mailer conscientiously explores all these possibilities, and, of course, finds no provable answers. In the process he has amassed in one volume the greatest body of information on the Oswalds yet attempted. This book may be too sprawling and diffuse and altogether too enigmatic to be genuinely revelatory and suspenseful in the manner of *The Executioner's Song*. Yet it is a constantly fascinating and clearly important document that, having presented its case in full, allows readers to infer what they can and will from the assembled facts. That is the primary mission of journalism at its best, and Mailer performs it with his customary skill and thoroughness, and a quite uncharacteristic determination to keep himself out of the story.

BRIEF REVIEWS

Evelyn Waugh

by Selina Hastings.
Houghton Mifflin, 724 pages, $40.00.

Ms. Hastings begins her excellent life of Waugh by acknowledging that her subject is widely considered both a great prose stylist and personally "a monster." She does not dispute either opinion. The first is unquestionably true: Waugh was a fine writer and, at his best, a splendid novelist. The second is, thanks to the memoirs of friends, relatives, and enemies and his own savage diaries, also well founded. When not writing, Waugh was a social climber, a toady, a parent whom his son Auberon "would willingly have swopped . . . for a bosun's whistle," a drug addict (although he probably thought he was merely taking sleeping aids), and an alcoholic whose binges lasted for days and involved an epic variety of poisons. He could be sadistically rude, usually to people who had done nothing to provoke it and were in no position to retaliate. On the other hand, when holed up working at his trade, he was reasonably quiet. He was regularly and unobtrusively generous to friends in need and to the Catholic Church, and there is much testimony to his wit and charm in conversation, although nobody seems to have recorded anything to demonstrate it. Ms. Hastings discusses the writer intelligently, with no attempt to elevate Waugh's potboiler travel pieces to classic status, but it is the doings of the monster that provide the compelling interest of her book. Whether Waugh attracted trouble or found it, the two met often and were inventive companions, remarkably rewarding to the reader safely out of reach of either of them.

My Dog Skip

by Willie Morris.
Random House, 136 pages, $15.00.

A good dog, smart, cooperative, humorous, and devoted, unfortunately grows old as his young owner grows up, but that owner's later recollection of games, pranks, near disasters, social disruptions, or just ambles around a small town on a long summer day will affectionately and extensively include his dog. Mr. Morris's Skip was a very good dog.

Polite Society

by Melanie Sumner.
Houghton Mifflin/Seymour Lawrence, 204 pages, $21.95.

After an opening section on marital discord in the diplomatic service, Ms. Sumner's fiction shifts to an unrelated character in the same area. Her heroine, Darren, has joined the Peace Corps for want of any better idea, and finds herself in Sene-

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gal with inadequate French and nothing to do, because the university is shut down. This may be just as well for the students, because this volunteer has no training or experience in teaching, and her notion of suitable material for a Senegalese English class is the work of William Faulkner. Her rootless situation bewilders Darren, who resorts to gin and local lovers and general blundering about in an alien society. Some of the action is funny and some is brutal, the African background and characters are always interesting, and the writing is always adroit. One may, however, eventually become a bit weary of a heroine totally devoid of common sense.

James McNeill Whistler

by Ronald Anderson and Anne Koval.
Carroll & Graf, 544 pages,
$30.00.

The authors have given no more attention than necessary to the dandified wit who could hold the floor with Oscar Wilde and have concentrated on the highly independent painter who battled England's smug artistic establishment, strongly influenced composition and methods, and was a major participant in the revival of serious practice in etching. His biographers assert that "in almost every genre of art, and in virtually every aspect of its production—its techniques, display and commercial marketing—his contribution was profound and lasting." They make this claim only after their fine text has provided extensive and fascinating information to support it.

The Quest for Becket's Bones

by John Butler.
Yale, 192 pages, $25.00.

Saint Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered in 1170 and subsequently honored with a bejeweled casket and shrine that were destroyed in 1538 on the orders of Henry VIII. It seems a little late to seek the location of his bones, which contemporary sources report were burned and "scattered to the wind," but the discovery, in 1888, of a most peculiar burial inside Canterbury Cathedral has led over the intervening years to a marvelous lot of theorizing, speculating, arguing, publishing, and redigging, all of it most soberly reported by Mr. Butler. The affair is, in its odd way, a touching example of the hopeless pursuit of unattainable knowledge. The illustrations are plentiful, handsome, and irrelevant.

Moo

by Jane Smiley.
Knopf, 416 pages, $24.00.

Ms. Smiley's novel describes faculty intrigues and student confusions at a cow college that has developed into a state university without altogether outgrowing its agricultural past. The place is in an uproar over finances. The blatherskite governor considers Moo U. a nest of liberal vipers who waste taxpayers' money. The academics consider the governor a malign nincompoop and scramble to cut costs. An entrepreneur sees an opportunity to camouflage his latest piece of international chicanery. The cast of characters includes the pampered hog Earl Butz, surreptitiously maintained in a building known as Old Meats. Earl is one character who knows exactly what he should do and does it. He eats. He also appears to be a cannon cracker with a smoldering fuse, and it is typical of this not-quite-serious, not-quite-satirical, multi-targeted novel that his explosion, when it finally comes, amounts to no more than a damp fusee.

Flashman and the Angel of the Lord

by George MacDonald Fraser.
Knopf, 400 pages,
$24.00.

In Mr. Fraser's disrespectful revision of official nineteenth-century history the abominable Flashman has arrived, altogether against his inclination, at Harper's Ferry. Flashman is as randily irresponsible as ever, and his sexual adventures satisfactorily grotesque, but the general tone of the text is less cynically irreverent than usual. It seems that Mr. Fraser has been unable to take John Brown lightly.

It's All the Rage: Crime and Culture

by Wendy Kaminer.
Addison-Wesley, 292 pages,
$22.00.

Portions of this book were first published in the May and June, 1994, issues of *The Atlantic*.

—***Phoebe-Lou Adams***

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WORD WATCH

by Anne H. Soukhanov

A selection of terms that have newly been coined, that have recently acquired new currency, or that have taken on new meanings, compiled by the executive editor of The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Third Edition.

address hygiene *noun*, the legible, accurate, and complete addressing of mail to enable fast sorting and prompt, correct delivery: "When this intricate [U.S. Postal Service mail-sorting] system works well, it flies. . . . When it works badly—for example, when letter-writers confound the computers by failing to practice what postal workers call '*address hygiene*'—it makes news" (*Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: The importance of good *address hygiene* has been emphasized in recent months by the U.S. Postal Service, which has drawn increasing fire from consumers and Congress for delayed or lost mail, particularly in and around Washington, D.C. Incomplete or illegible addresses are especially problematic for computerized scanners, which get first crack at most letters. The term *address hygiene*—government jargon at its best—is derived by association with the compounds *dental hygiene* and *personal hygiene*. Another recent example of derivation by association: the idiom *going postal*, which takes its form from older idioms like *going crazy* and *going ballistic*, and which refers to incidents of workplace violence by employees, including a spate of shootings by disgruntled postal workers.

appeasement engineer *noun, slang*, an ineffective, usually inexperienced and unknowledgeable, field-service computer technician: "Because he's NEW and ALONE, he's what you call an *appeasement engineer*, the new guy they send so they respond within the 4 hour guaranteed response period. . . their main job is to make sure the power plug is in and switched on, then call back to the office for 'PARTS'" (the Internet).

BACKGROUND: The quotation above represents our sole citation for this term—one of a countless number of new coinages to be found on online communications networks. It remains to be seen how many of these terms will cross over to print.

cross-functional *noun*, a manager or worker who, in a short-staffed company, must perform myriad tasks once assigned to employees who have since been let go: "The Over-worked *Cross-Functional*. . . [has] been given additional, different duties—and thus must work 'cross-functionally'—because other workers have been fired as companies slash staff" (*Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: The term *cross-functional* is, in a sense, itself an example of the phenomenon it describes, having begun as an adjective and lately been pressed into service as a noun. The linguistic process by which words make such "functional shifts" was highlighted in this column in April of 1988, in connection with the noun *snide*. Examples of shifts are rife, especially in the parlance of social services and human resources: think of the nouns *alcoholic* and *professional*, to name only two.

drive-by hatred *noun*, seemingly motiveless acts of loathing typically directed at a victim not personally known to the perpetrator and taking the form of frightening faxes or mail, raging telephone calls, death threats, and even physical violence: "Some of the behavior associated with the Vietnam War protests or the civil rights movement may have been extreme. . . , but the hatred today is more frightening. 'It's more a random hatred,' [Michael G. Gartner] says. 'It's. . . *drive-by hatred*'" (*Washington Post*).

BACKGROUND: Gartner, a former president of NBC News, coined this term last fall in direct association with *drive-by shooting*. Pollsters have postulated that *drive-by hatred* is rooted in growing fears about social and economic conditions; other analysts blame the increasingly strident discourse of religious leaders, politicians, and talk-show callers and hosts. Electronic technology, of course, makes the expression of such hatred faster and easier than ever before.

off the grid *idiom*, living in total independence, far from populated areas, while awaiting and expecting the disintegration of society: "[James (Bo)] Gritz. . . is, at 55, a leader of the radical right-wing survivalist movement. . . .'We are going to live our lives according to our ways,' Gritz is saying. . . .'Personally I'm going to go *off the grid*, because every time I've lived *off the grid*, like Vietnam, I've been very happy'" (*New York Times Magazine*).

BACKGROUND: More than 10,000 survivalists, conspiracy theorists, Christian constitutionalists, and New Age back-to-the-landers are living *off the grid* in rural areas such as western Montana, northern Idaho, and eastern Washington; they dwell in tepees and hand-built cabins, eat dried food with a long shelf life, and remain aloof from the traditional economy (and often the IRS). *Off the grid* is originally and primarily a military term denoting a soldier or unit that moves beyond the area described by the lines superimposed on maps to help identify ground locations.

Illustration by Michael C. Witte

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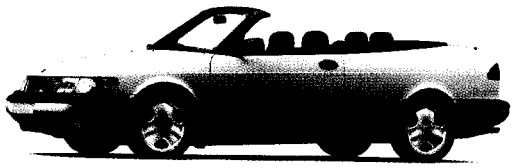

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